

'Israeli Watergate' reported

TEL AVIV (AP) — The opposition Labour Party demanded a police inquiry Sunday following a newspaper report that supporters of Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir's Likud bloc broke into Labour headquarters to steal information. The daily Maariv, which broke the story Friday, called it the "Israeli Watergate." The paper claimed that three months before the 1988 general election, private investigators broke into Labour election headquarters at a Tel Aviv hotel, photographed documents and passed them to the Likud. The paper voiced suspicions that Police Minister Rowi Milo, chairman of the Likud 1988 elections campaign, may have been involved in the affair. Mr. Milo's spokesman Rafi Levy said that "as far as the minister knows the published story never occurred." Likud spokesman Gil Samsanov denied the party was involved. "The Likud doesn't know anything about the whole affair and if someone brought in the material we don't know anything about it," Mr. Samsanov said. Labour party leader Shimon Peres demanded an investigation, saying Maariv "cannot be left up in the air." Party spokesman Shmuel Algrabi said Labour was asking police to act. The party also demanded a parliamentary debate, but Speaker Dov Shilansky refused.



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Happy 'Eid Al Fitr

AMMAN (J.T.) — Chief Islamic Justice Mohammad Mhalla announced Sunday that the month of Shawwal had been sighted and 'Eid Al Fitr begins Monday. The government has declared a five-day holiday to mark the 'Eid. All ministries and government departments will resume work on Saturday. The Jordan Times will not be published on Tuesday and Wednesday. The next issue of the paper will appear on Thursday. The Jordan Times wishes its readers and advertisers a very happy 'Eid Al Fitr.

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Sabah family member admits drug smuggling

CAIRO (R) — A member of Kuwait's ruling family admitted Sunday that he smuggled heroin into Egypt but denied he was a drug trafficker. "I brought in the heroin from Syria for my own use," Sheikh Talal Nasser Al Sabah, a second cousin to Kuwait's Emir Sheikh Jaber Al Ahmad Al Sabah, told reporters. "I burn 30-40 grammes of heroin daily, I am not selling it," a tired and shaky Sheikh Talal said after questioning by drugs prosecutors (see page 2).

Algerian hijacker stands trial

ALGIERS (R) — A man who tried to hijack a French airliner on a flight from Paris to Algiers last August went on trial in Algiers Sunday. Fayed Abdul Nasser Jamal, 30, an Algerian emigrant merchant under an expulsion order from France, threatened the pilot of the Air France aircraft with "weapons" which turned out to be a cake of soap and a can of shaving cream. He gave himself up when the plane landed. He said he wanted to draw attention to the plight of Lebanese during the civil war, calling for an international conference on the conflict. After an argument over the use of Arabic, which is obligatory at Algerian trials, the court adjourned the case to an unspecified date.

British attaché leaves Algeria

ALGIERS (R) — A British military attaché in Algeria has been moved to another post. Algerian Radio said the government asked him to leave the country. A source close to the British embassy in Algiers said Royal Air Force Group Captain William Cross left Algiers on Friday after nine months in the post to take a job in another country. State radio said Capt. Cross was caught in the Birine region south of Algiers in possession of a camera, "knowing that the taking of photographs is prohibited in this area." A spokesman for the embassy said he had no comment on the Algerian Radio report that Capt. Cross was asked to leave the country.

EC plans talks with Israel, Turkey

LUXEMBOURG (R) — Luxembourg's Prime Minister Jacques Santer, whose country is current president of the European Community (EC), will meet Israeli and Turkish leaders in London Monday, he said Sunday. Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir had requested a meeting with Mr. Santer, who will be in London for inaugural meetings of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development. Mr. Santer will also have talks with Turkish Prime Minister Yildirim Akbulut.

Israel deports Ethiopian girl

TEL AVIV (R) — Israel has deported a 16-year-old Ethiopian girl after discovering she was not Jewish, immigration officials said Sunday. "She came here on false pretences. She was presented as being Jewish when she was not," said a spokesman for the Jewish Agency, which brings immigrants to Israel. He said the girl had stated she was the daughter of a Jewish Ethiopian couple in order to acquire immigration papers. Ethiopian Jews may immigrate to Israel under a family reunification programme. In March, Ethiopia temporarily suspended the emigration and accused Israeli authorities in Addis Ababa of giving visas to non-Jews.

72 wounded from Mali in Libya

NICOSIA (R) — Seventy-two people from Mali arrived in Libya Saturday for treatment to wounds received during last month's revolt against former President Moussa Traore, the Libyan news agency JANA said Sunday. They were flown on a Libyan plane, said JANA, monitored in Cyprus. A Libyan medical team was due to fly to Mali.

U.S. begins Iraq pullout

Combined agency dispatches

THE UNITED STATES Sunday began pulling back all its troops in southern Iraq to a newly established demilitarised zone along the Iraq-Kuwait border, the U.S. central command announced.

Many of the troops would move on to bases in Saudi Arabia for immediate return home, said a U.S. command spokesman on condition of anonymity. Defence Secretary Dick Cheney confirmed the order to pull back the U.S.-based first Infantry Division and the European-based Third Armoured Division, from their current positions south of the Euphrates River.

"Within the next several days we'll be out of southern Iraq except for" the demilitarised strip reaching 10 kilometres into Iraq from the Kuwait border, Mr. Cheney told NBC television in Washington.

"Our forces are now pulling back to that buffer zone and will stay there until the blue-helmed force arrives from the U.N.," Mr. Cheney said. Under the Gulf war ceasefire terms, a United

Nations peacekeeping force is to monitor the 200-kilometre border, but the timing has not been set.

The U.S. command reported that U.S. troop strength in the Gulf had dropped Sunday to 295,000 from a peak of 540,000 at the height of the Gulf war, which ended Feb. 28.

Mr. Cheney reiterated a U.S. pledge, made earlier by President George Bush, to continue sending relief supplies to refugees stranded on Iraq's borders.

"We'll continue that effort until international organisations are able to take over," Mr. Cheney said, at least "for the next several days..."

"We're the only ones capable of providing this kind of assistance," Mr. Cheney told interviewer Gerrick Utley. "Our major effort right now, Gerrick, is of course in the south where we are providing for those people who fled to Safwan and down along the Kuwaiti border."

He said there were also major efforts, with the British and French, in Turkey and along Iraq's northern border with Turkey, to air drop food, water and other supplies to the refugees.

"Eventually it's the kind of effort I think ought to be taken over by international relief organisations," Mr. Cheney said. But, he said, "we clearly are not going to withdraw and end the effort in a way that leaves those people vulnerable."

The U.S. command said in a communique that allied forces would "continue to protect and provide humanitarian assistance to refugees in the demilitarised zone, to include the refugees at Safwan."

It also invited any other refugees in the area formerly occupied by the Americans to move into the demilitarised zone for assistance and protection if they so desired.

The command did not give the numbers of troops involved in the Iraq pullout. Each division numbers from 15,000 to 20,000 troops, plus supporting elements such as transportation units.

A 1,440-member U.N. peacekeeping force, the first elements of which arrived in Kuwait Saturday, is to take over patrolling the demilitarised zone.

The command said the allied

Saddam visits north, urges Kurds to return

Combined agency dispatches

IRAQI PRESIDENT SADDAM Hussein has told Kurds who fled Iraq after their month-long rebellion was crushed that they can go home without fear of reprisal, except for murderers, rapists and thieves.

The president's message was delivered in the Kurdish town of Erbil Saturday when he made his first visit to the region since the rebellion was crushed last month.

The visit was splashed on the front pages of Iraq's official newspapers Sunday. It stressed that Kurds who merely voiced support for the rebels during street demonstrations had nothing to fear from the authorities.

"What is past is past. We are starting anew," President Saddam told the deputy governor of Erbil province and members of the ruling Baath Party there. "Let everyone return to their home town and people and let us start anew."

"The killers, the violators of

people's honour and those who stole the assets of the state and the people and have not returned them — we do not give guarantees to those people."

He told officials in the Kurdistan autonomous region which covers the provinces of Erbil, Sulaymaniyah and Dohuk, to spread the message.

President Saddam said he had ordered security agents to leave ordinary Kurds alone. "Don't even ask them a single question," he said many had been led astray by "the devil."

"We mean those people we call hoodlums because they slipped and followed the devil."

He said ordinary Kurds had nothing to fear even if they had been caught up in the unrest. "He who has been forced to leave his home and support the rebels in demonstrations or who shouted with them is pardoned."

Iran and Turkey say two million Iraqis have sought sanctuary in their territory after the crushing of the Kurdish rebellion

and unrest by Shiites in southern Iraq.

A delegation from the United Nations has begun talks with Iraq Sunday on ways of easing the plight of the refugees.

"I outlined the views of the United Nations," the leader of the U.N. team, Eric Suy, told Reuters. "It has to do with the displaced persons."

Mr. Suy began his talks on Saturday by meeting the head of the Foreign Ministry department dealing with international organisations.

He met Prime Minister Saadoun Hammadi and other members of his government on Sunday.

Iraq, which dismissed talk of reprisals as lies spread by the rebels, crushed the rebellion in the south before wheeling round to dislodge the Kurdish rebels in the north.

President Saddam, who has promised moves towards democracy, said the time had come for

Italian government gets off to shaky start

ROME (R) — Politicians from left to right gave Italian Prime Minister Giulio Andreotti's new coalition a thumbs down Sunday, reflecting internal dissent that brought down his last government on March 29.

Dubbed a stop-gap government by the press, his coalition got off to a shaky start when one party walked out, leaving three ministries vacant even before it was sworn in Saturday.

Even Mr. Andreotti's own ministers commented sarcastically on the false start for Italy's 50th post-war government, which left him holding the portfolios rejected by the Republican Party.

"This government was born prematurely and it's therefore going to have to spend some time in the incubator," said Socialist Deputy Premier Claudio Martelli.

It was Mr. Andreotti's Socialist allies who provoked the crisis in February by vetoing a cabinet reshuffle. In the end, the two-month crisis produced little else. "New government, old faces," commented one newspaper.

"Interim government," the financial daily Il Sole-24 Ore pro-

(Continued on page 2)

Iraq accuses Iran of violating ceasefire

NICOSIA (R) — Iraq said Sunday an Iranian force killed one of its soldiers and kidnapped nine others in a cross-border raid last week in violation of the U.N.-brokered ceasefire which ended their eight-year war.

The Iraqi News Agency (INA) said the charge was made in a complaint sent to U.N. Secretary General Javier Perez de Cuellar last Tuesday.

"The violation reaffirms the Iranian government's insistence on violating the ceasefire between the two countries and its premeditated effort to undermine Iraq's sovereignty and security," Iraq said in its note, submitted by its ambassador to the United Nations, Abdul Amir Al Anbari.

"My government reaffirms the Iranian government's responsibility for all the damage caused by these violations and demands it return all the kidnapped soldiers," he said.

The latest rift between the two neighbours echoed the animosity of their 1980-88 war.

Baghdad accused Tehran of inciting twin rebellions by Shiites in south Iraq and Kurds in the north of the country. They were crushed by Iraqi government forces, triggering a massive exodus of refugees to Turkey and Iran.

On Friday, Baghdad challenged Tehran's assertion that it

was ready to return 22 Iraqi aircraft which fled to Iran during the Gulf war to escape destruction by the allies' air and missile attacks. It said 148 of its planes had fled to Iran.

The rift ended a short period of improvement in ties which began soon after Iraq invaded Kuwait in August last year. Iran was neutral in the Gulf war.

An Iranian newspaper urged the Tehran government Sunday not to return the Iraqi planes. Kayhan International contended the Iraqi government of President Saddam Hussein had no right to the aircraft because it no longer represented the Iraqi people.

"Tehran should never return the Iraqi military planes... as long as the person of Saddam roles," said the English-language newspaper.

"The planes belong to the Iraqi people..."

The Iranian Foreign Ministry Sunday protested to Iraq's charge of aircraft in Tehran about the Iraqi figure for the number of aircraft, which he described as untrue.

"A Foreign Ministry official today warned the Iraqi charge of aircraft that such erroneous claims raised by Iraqi officials would mislead world public opinion," the Iranian News Agency IRNA said.



Prince Sadruddin Aga Khan (left) with Dr. Michel Hamarneh, director of the office of His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan, who received him upon arrival Sunday (Petra photo)

Aga Khan en route to Iraq

AMMAN (J.T.) — Prince Sadruddin Aga Khan, the executive envoy of United Nations Secretary General Javier Perez de Cuellar for humanitarian affairs, arrived Sunday in Amman on his way to Baghdad where he will hold talks with Iraqi officials on the post-war situation in Iraq.

Prince Aga Khan said in a statement upon arrival at the airport that his visit to Iraq comes within the framework of implementing the U.N. humanitarian programme which aims to extend aid to those affected by the recent incidents in Iraq.

He said Iraqi women and children were the worst hit by the Gulf crisis. He added that the U.N. had conducted a survey on the needs of those affected by the Gulf war.

Mr. Perez de Cuellar has called for drawing up an emergency programme which includes the alloca-

tion of \$178 million worth of assistance to the people affected by the crisis.

Prince Aga Khan said his mission in Baghdad will centre on implementing this programme. He will meet with Iraqi officials and will pay field visits to parts of Iraq to get firsthand knowledge on the needs of the Iraqi people.

He said his tour in the region might include Iran and Turkey to inspect the conditions of Iraqi refugees there.

The U.N. envoy was received in the airport by the director of the office of His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan, Dr. Michel Hamarneh, and several representatives of international organisations in Amman.

In Baghdad, the United Nations and the government Sunday discussed ways of alleviating the plight of hundreds of thousands of Iraqis.

"We made good progress," Assistant U.N. Secretary General Zia Rizvi told Reuters after the talks.

Mr. Rizvi is in a three-member team preparing the ground for the visit by Prince Aga Khan, in overall charge of meeting humanitarian needs in and around Iraq and Kuwait.

Prince Aga Khan was expected in Baghdad on Monday.

The U.N. team, led by Belgian Eric Suy, met Prime Minister Saadoun Hammadi, Foreign Minister Ahmad Hussein Khudayer and Information Minister Hamid Yusuf Hammadi.

Mr. Hammadi told the Iraqi News Agency after meeting Mr. Suy he was satisfied with the discussions and repeated calls for all Iraqi Kurds to return.

He said Iraq was ready to cooperate with any U.N. initiative that would help their return.

Poll shows Palestinians support confederation

TEL AVIV (AP) — A survey of more than 1,100 Israeli Jews published Sunday showed a persisting trend of "creeping conciliation" towards the Palestinians despite the Gulf war.

The annual poll, conducted for Tel Aviv University's Jaffee Centre for Strategic Studies, found that nearly one-third of those surveyed said the war had changed their political opinions.

But about half of those said they became more hawkish, while the other half adopted more dovish attitudes, leaving the population divided on how to proceed towards peace, the analysts said.

Still, the survey said it detected "creeping conciliation which has characterised Israel over the past years."

For example, 58 per cent of those surveyed this year favoured a return of the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip, up from about 47 per cent in 1987, the survey found. Thirty-four per cent would agree to an independent Palestinian state, up from less than 25 per cent five years ago, it said.

A separate door-to-door survey of Palestinian attitudes by an Arab Jerusalem Research Centre found the Arabs very pessimistic about peace prospects following the Gulf war.

The surveyors interviewed nearly 3,000 people in the West Bank, Gaza Strip and Arab Jerusalem, according to the report published in the Al Nahar newspaper.

The study found that 67 per cent of Palestinians questioned in the West Bank and 74 per cent in Gaza expected a lot of talk about peace this year but no resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

The report by the Arab Centre for Research and Studies also indicated rising support for a Jordan-Palestinian confederation in the occupied territories.

It said that before the war, Palestinians showed strongest support for an independent Palestinian state replacing Israel or in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. After the conflict, 65 per cent in the West Bank and 56 per cent in Arab Jerusalem opted for confederation with Jordan, it added.

The Jaffee Centre study was the latest in a series of surveys begun in 1984 by Asher Arian, a professor at the University of Haifa.

(Continued on page 4)

Shamir dusts off 'autonomy' plan, offers it to Palestinians

TEL AVIV (Agencies) — Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir Sunday offered Palestinians limited self-rule in the occupied territories, as outlined in the 1978 accords with Egypt which Palestinians rejected.

Mr. Shamir flew to London where he is to meet Soviet Prime Minister Valentin Pavlov (see page 2). At an airport news conference, he said he would urge the Soviet Union to restore full diplomatic relations with Israel and present his positions on peace talks.

"... In the negotiations for Camp David accords we spoke of full autonomy (for Palestinians). And there was an impressive list of the powers they will receive in all the areas of life except for some things which make the difference between the type of rule they will receive and an independent state."

Mr. Shamir and his advisers said the proposal was not new but based on the 1978 Camp David accords under which Israel and Egypt agreed that Palestinians in the occupied territories should be granted an interim period of limited self rule.

According to that agreement, Palestinians would control internal affairs but not security or foreign affairs. Mr. Shamir said offices set up to manage these internal affairs would be the equivalent of ministries.

Mr. Shamir said his proposal would let Palestinians set up ministries for police, culture, education, trade, justice and health. They would take charge of their own matters except for foreign affairs and defence.

"The security services would remain ours," he was quoted as saying. He said the sides would have to discuss creating political parties and newspapers in the occupied territories.

Palestinian leaders rejected the Camp David accords and the autonomy plan has not yet been implemented. In May 1989, Israel proposed elections in the occupied territories to choose representatives to negotiate self-rule with Israel.

Mr. Shamir said he would explain Israel's ideas for resolving the Arab-Israeli conflict to Mr. Pavlov in London.

"We made the participation of the Soviet Union in providing auspices in a regular meeting between Israel and the Arab World conditional on full normalisation of diplomatic relations. Of course we will talk about this," Mr. Shamir said.

The Soviet Union severed ties

with Israel in 1967 and relations are now at the consular level.

The United States is trying to bring Israelis and Arabs to the negotiating table.

Israel and the United States have agreed to a regional conference attended by Israel, Palestinians and Arab states, with U.S. and possibly Soviet participation. It is not yet clear if Palestinians or Arab states will agree to this forum.

Foreign Minister David Levy urged the government on Sunday to quietly press ahead with Jewish settlement in the occupied territories, described by the United States as an obstacle to peace.

Mr. Shamir said it was his government's policy to expand "development" in the occupied territories.

Mr. Shamir also said Sunday he was hearing "positive things and less positive things" about U.S. Secretary of State James Baker's talks with Arab leaders on peace moves.

Mr. Shamir said Baker's intensification of Middle East diplomacy "proves that there is something in it, something to talk about it."

Mr. Shamir said he did not yet have a full report on Mr. Baker's talks with Egyptian, Syrian, Saudi and Jordanian officials during his last tour of the region last week.

But from what he had heard, Mr. Shamir said, "there are positive things and less positive things; there are things that are agreed and things that are not agreed." He would not give any

(Continued on page 4)

Aziz holds talks with Masri, leaves for home

AMMAN (AP) — Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister Tareq Aziz met Sunday with Foreign Minister Taher Al Masri and discussed post-Gulf war Middle East strategy, a source said.

Mr. Aziz, who arrived in Amman late Saturday night after rounding up a tour to Sudan and Yemen, departed on a 12-hour land trip to Baghdad.

This was Mr. Aziz's second visit to Jordan within three days coinciding with the departure and return of Mr. Masri after Middle East peace talks with U.S. Secretary of States James Baker in Geneva Friday.

An informed source said Mr. Aziz's talks Sunday "centered on Middle East peace strategy in the aftermath of the Gulf war."

Speaking on condition of anonymity, the source refused to disclose further information about Aziz-Masri talks saying they were "confidential."

An Iraqi embassy official said Mr. Aziz's visit to Jordan "was not official. He came here only to continue his route by land to Baghdad."

On Thursday, Mr. Aziz was received by His Majesty King Hussein, Prime Minister Mudar Badran and other Jordanian officials also met with Mr. Aziz and discussed Iraq's reconstruction plans.

Arafat said to reject regional conference

RABAT (R) — Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) Chairman Yasser Arafat has rejected U.S. Secretary of State, James Baker's proposal for a regional Middle East peace conference.

Mr. Arafat, who conferred twice Saturday night with King Hassan in Rabat, rejected the proposal in a statement shortly after his arrival, Moroccan state television reported.

The PLO fears the proposed regional conference grouping the United States, the Soviet Union, Arab states and Israel, would serve as a pretext for normalising Israel's relations with Arab states and push the Palestinian issue into the background.

The PLO demands that any Middle East peace conference be based on United Nations resolutions.

An official PLO spokesman in Tunis said at the weekend that "the PLO is following with keen interest the contacts and talks conducted by American Secretary of State James Baker... and when the time comes will define the Palestinian position after studying the results."

Mr. Baker ended his second Middle East tour since the end of the Gulf war Friday.

Upon the Occasion of
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Thousands of lives said at risk in impending famine in Sudan

NICOSIA (R) — A plan to save the lives of thousands threatened with famine in southern Sudan has been so held up by the government that Western donor states are considering going ahead without official approval.

Relief officials in the Sudanese capital, Khartoum, said on Sunday that hundreds, possibly thousands of southern Sudanese would die within three months unless famine relief was rushed to their war-stricken region.

The officials, contacted by telephone, said they were so alarmed by the delay and worried about loss of life that they were considering giving the military government of Omar Hassan Al Bashir an ultimatum.

They said they feared a repeat of 1988 when a quarter of a million southern Sudanese died from hunger and malnutrition aggravated by years of civil war in the vast region.

The officials said a blueprint for a relief operation was submitted to the government three weeks ago after months of tough talks over details but there has been no response.

Unless the government moved quickly, the donors would order the launch of a cross-border relief operation for the south without Khartoum's official go-ahead, the relief officials said.

Such an operation would be primarily targeted at rebel-held areas and would use helicopter-

ing Kenya, Uganda and the Central African Republic as bases, they said.

The three black African nations are often at odds with Sudan and known to be sympathetic to southern Sudanese rebels, who say they champion the rights of the animist and Christian south against domination by the Arabised Muslim north.

"The donors have already started to call it the 'relief by force' option," said one official. "They hope to obtain some sort of an international mandate to do so on humanitarian grounds."

Sudan's relief policies have in recent months been sharply criticised by the United States, Britain and the European Community — the country's three main relief donors.

Its sympathy with Iraq over the Gulf crisis and alleged human rights violations by the government, in power since a civilian administration was toppled in a coup led by Gen. Bashir in 1989, have led to its relative isolation abroad.

"Unless food goes now, heavy casualties will occur within three months," said one senior relief official who recently returned from a United Nations-sponsored survey of south Sudan.

"People are already dying, but hundreds, and possibly thousands, will die soon if food does not reach them."

"There is an obvious absence of a spirit of peace on the part of

the government," said one relief official who took part in the talks with the government.

He said the government was taking an increasingly hardline stand on the southern rebellion and the work of foreign relief workers in Sudan.

Gen. Bashir's government abruptly ended a U.N.-led relief operation for the south in December and had earlier accused relief workers of aiding rebels and undermining security.

The war in the south, the second since an earlier, 17-year bout of civil strife ended in 1972, has forced more than three million southerners to flee their homes.

U.N. bodies and voluntary relief organisations believe an estimated 7.5 million people face acute hunger in Sudan this year. They say 1.2 million tonnes of food supplies are needed for 1991 to head off widespread deaths.

They said 500,000 tonnes were needed for southern areas and garrison towns held by the army, while 200,000 more should go to areas controlled by the rebel Sudan People's Liberation Army.

The crisis, which Gen. Bashir's government has called a "food gap," is the result of a drought, resultant crop failures and civil strife.

"The absence of a plan of action for the south means that zero amount of food has been pledged so far for the area," said one U.N. relief worker.

Shamir to meet Pavlov, Major

TEL AVIV (AP) — Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir is to meet for the first time this week with Soviet counterpart, Valentin S. Pavlov, and is expected to push for full diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union, government officials said Sunday.

The meeting with Mr. Pavlov — as well as European leaders including British Prime Minister John Major — are to take place during a two-day visit to London.

The central purpose of his trip is to attend the Monday inauguration of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development. The financial institution is being set up to help rebuild the economies of Eastern Europe.

Government officials, who insisted on anonymity, said Mr. Shamir was likely to urge Mr. Pavlov to push for restoration of full diplomatic relations.

Israel has made restoration of relations a condition for the Soviets joining any Middle East peace process.

The Soviet Union broke diplomatic ties with Israel after the 1967 Middle East war.

Relations between the two countries have warmed over the past several years. Late last year the countries' missions were raised to consular status.

Meantime, thousands of Soviet Jews have immigrated to Israel since the Soviet Union relaxed exit policies in the spring of 1989. So far, more than 230,000 Soviets have arrived, and government officials predict that between 200,000 and 300,000 Soviet Jews will come this year.

Government officials said Shamir also planned meeting with political leaders from Romania, Czechoslovakia, the Netherlands, Luxembourg and Bulgaria.

Israel is seeking to improve its relations with European nations in advance of the 1992 economic unification of the European Community. Israel wants special trading status with the community.

The government officials said Mr. Shamir probably would brief Major and other European officials on his recent talks with U.S. Secretary of State James Baker on Middle East peace prospects.

Israel has proposed a regional conference to get negotiations under way. It has ruled out an international conference — which would include European participation.

Member of Al Sabah family held for heroin trafficking

CAIRO (Agencies) — A member of the ruling Kuwaiti family has been arrested with nearly one kilogramme of heroin in his possession, a newspaper and a police officer said Sunday.

Daily Al Ahram newspaper, in a front-page report, said Sheikh Talal Nasser Al Sabah was arrested in his furnished flat Saturday night. A Syrian man, Abdou Ahmad Na'im, was also arrested.

Al Ahram said undercover narcotics agents posing as drug dealers had offered to buy one million pounds (\$300,000) worth of heroin from Sheikh Talal. They arrested him as the transaction took place and found three quarters of a kilogramme of heroin in his flat.

A police officer at the narcotics department confirmed Sheikh Talal's arrest. The narcotics prosecutor's office said no charges had been filed and that the interrogation of Sheikh Talal and the Syrian was to start later Sunday.

Sheikh Talal's exact relationship to Kuwait's Al Sabah ruling family was not immediately known.

Al Ahram said that preliminary investigations showed that Sheikh Talal was allegedly a heroin addict who resorted to trading in drugs to keep up with his expenses. The investigations said he hid the

heroin in his baggage which usually went unchecked at airports because of the Al Sabah name.

If charged and convicted, the Kuwaiti and Syrian could face the death penalty.

"They will stand before prosecutors on Sunday," one officer said.

The police said they had been keeping an eye on Sheikh Talal, who visited Egypt often. They said he was a heroin addict and became a trafficker to maintain his lavish lifestyle.

"He used to hide the heroin in his luggage, taking advantage of the good treatment members of the Al Sabah family got at Egyptian entry ports," the officer said.

Police said Sheikh Talal and his Syrian partner were selling the heroin for almost \$91,000.

Sheikh Talal, police said, would not get any special treatment because he was a member of the Al Sabah family.

Kuwaiti embassy officials could not immediately be reached.

Egypt began a serious crackdown on drug traffickers in 1989 after thousands of its young took to drugs and Cairo's maze-like alleys and backstreets teemed with hundreds of drug peddlers.

It executed its first convicted drug smuggler, a Pakistani, in July 1989.

Gulf states to discuss fund for Arab states hit by war

BAHRAIN (R) — Finance ministers from six Gulf Arab states will meet in Riyadh next Sunday to approve plans for a multi-billion dollar fund for Arab countries hit by the Gulf crisis, diplomats and officials in the region said Sunday.

They said the six Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states — Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar, Oman, the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain — planned to put an initial \$5 billion in the fund, which was set up at their summit in Doha last December.

The fund, which will eventually total \$15 billion, would extend soft loans to poor Arab countries which are part of the allied coalition against Iraq, such as Egypt and Syria.

Countries such as Yemen, Jordan and Sudan would initially be excluded although eventually every Arab state would be eligible for aid, the diplomats said.

Many Arab states were hit economically by the Gulf crisis, which disrupted trade and halted the remittance of salaries by

workers in the region.

A loan approval committee comprising existing GCC development banks, finance ministers and central bank governors would be set up to make sure the money — intended for balance of payments and project finance — was used wisely, they added.

GCC states, which own more than 40 per cent of the world's known oil reserves, previously helped the economies of Jordan, Iraq and Yemen and gave cash to the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO).

Diplomats said the GCC was not entirely happy with the way the money had been spent in the past and would probably ask the International Monetary Fund to provide technical assistance to ensure that the loans were used correctly.

The GCC was also considering asking Japan and Western nations such as Germany, France, and the United States to get involved so that they could more easily justify putting conditions on the aid, they added.

Karami: Force will not be used to disarm Palestinians

BEIRUT (R) — Prime Minister Omar Karami, in a policy shift, said in remarks published Sunday the Lebanese government would not use force to disarm Palestinian guerrillas.

"We have informed the Palestinians, and previously the Lebanese militias, that we do not have the intention of using force (to disarm them)," Mr. Karami told the Al Diyar newspaper.

The Syrian-backed government of President Elias Hrawi last month ordered all of the country's private armies, Lebanese and non-Lebanese, to disband by the end of April or face being crushed by the army and Syrian troops.

Palestinian officials, arguing they need their guns to defend Lebanon's 13 refugee camps and liberate Israel's self-declared "security zone" in South Lebanon, have vowed not to surrender their weapons.

The government sent an envoy, Mohsen Ibrahim, to Tunis and Algeria last week for talks with the leadership of the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) and Algerian mediators to discuss disarming Lebanon's 10,000 Palestinian fighters.

"Palestinians (in Lebanon) are our guests and their cause is ours," Mr. Karami said in the interview.

"That is why we want to arrive together and through dialogue at solutions that preserve the rights

of the Palestinians on condition that our independence and sovereignty are not touched."

Mr. Karami said the government was also in talks with the Lebanese militias which were "cooperating and understanding."

The premier said France was exerting pressure on Lebanon to allow General Michel Aoun leave his sanctuary at the French embassy in Beirut for asylum in Paris.

Gen. Aoun, who defied the authority of Mr. Hrawi for 11 months, sought refuge at the embassy on Oct. 13 last year after he was bombed out of the presidential palace by Syrian planes.

Paris granted him political asylum but Mr. Hrawi said he wanted to try him as a war criminal and asked him to return some \$35 million of the state's money.

"France is pressing to release him as a political refugee in France. Before anything, he should be handed over to the judiciary," Mr. Karami said.

"The method in which (Paris) is dealing with this issue is an infringement of Lebanon's sovereignty and dignity," he said.

"The issue of the money is part of the problem, but they are portraying us as running behind money... the basic element of (Aoun's) problem is the political aspect and breaking the law," Mr. Karami said.

Nixon talks tough against Iraqi leader

NEW YORK (R) — Former U.S. President Richard Nixon has said he would order the assassination of Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein if he were still in the White House.

In the transcript of a U.S. television interview aired Sunday, Mr. Nixon also said Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev might have missed his chance to change his country.

Mr. Nixon, 78, called President Saddam "an international menace" and would be a "threat to peace and stability in the area," within five years if he stayed in power.

"If I could find a way to get him out of there, even putting a contract out on him, if the CIA (Central Intelligence Agency) still did that sort of a thing, assuming it ever did, I would be for it," Mr. Nixon said.

The term "contract" is U.S. organised crime jargon for a hired killing.

Mr. Nixon, the only U.S. president to resign from office, was known as a tough-minded international negotiator during his time as U.S. leader from 1969 to 1974.

If President Saddam were willing to leave Iraq in exchange for an agreement not to be prosecuted for "war crimes," Mr. Nixon said he would "greatly tempted" to agree to the deal.

Speaking of Mr. Gorbachev, whom Mr. Nixon met during a recent visit to the Soviet Union, the former president said Soviet citizens felt he was "weak."

"They said he was indecisive. They said he was a talker, rather than a doer. One of them described him... as a brutal wimp," he said.

Mr. Gorbachev made "a fundamental error in turning to reactionaries in order to keep power, when by continuing to work with reformers, he could make a new Soviet Union," he said.

"Mr. Nixon said Boris Yeltsin, the Russian Federation president who is considered Mr. Gorbachev's chief rival, had 'animal magnetism' and was 'a formidable political personality.'"

Since his resignation Mr. Nixon has written several books and emerged as an elder statesman who often comments on public events.

MIDDLE EAST NEWS IN BRIEF

Israel says troops killed two guerrillas

TEL AVIV (AP) — Israeli troops killed two Arab guerrillas in a clash Sunday in South Lebanon, the army command said. The incident occurred as the soldiers were patrolling in the western sector of Israel's self-proclaimed "security zone," the army said in a communiqué. It said two guerrillas were killed and that Israeli troops sustained no injuries. No other details were released. Israel carved out the 1,100 square kilometre zone in 1985 when it withdrew the bulk of its forces after a three-year occupation of southern Lebanon. The zone is patrolled jointly by Israel and members of the Israeli-financed South Lebanon Army militia.

Egyptian food poisoning rises to 19

CAIRO (AP) — At least 19 people have died from food poisoning after eating salted fish in a spring feast this week, newspapers said Sunday. Hundreds of Egyptians suffered from food poisoning after eating the fish which apparently all came from one shop. Daily Al Ahram newspaper said that the shop's owner, Moustassir Mohamad Ali, was released on a 3,000 pound (\$1,000) bail. Al Ahram said that the number of deaths from the poisoning had reached 19. Another daily, Al Gomhuriya, said only 14 had died. Last Monday, millions of Egyptians celebrated the holiday called Sham Al Nessim, or "smell the breeze," a traditional feast that heralds the start of spring. The feast originated in antiquity, when Egypt was ruled by Pharaohs. Part of its tradition is eating salted fish, onions, eggs and lettuce.

Siad Barre's loyalists reportedly defeated

NAIROBI (AP) — Somalia's interim government says it has repulsed an attack by loyalist forces of ex-President Mohammad Siad Barre in an area southwest of the capital of Mogadishu. In a broadcast Saturday night, Somali radio said the Barre loyalists had launched an attack in the Shabeellaha Hoose region, but had been repulsed. The broadcast, monitored in Nairobi, did not report the specific location of the battle, when it occurred or give casualty figures for either side. The broadcast quoted Husayn Ali Shidow, chairman of the United Somali Congress, as saying the Siad Barre loyalists had been dealt a "devastating blow." The United Somali Congress drove Siad Barre out of Mogadishu in late January and set up an interim government. It was one of several rebel groups seeking the ex-president's ouster. The interim government has not been accepted by all other rebel groups and it has been engaged in scattered fighting with some of them and remnants of Mr. Siad Barre's army.

French nationals injured in Iran crash

NICOSIA (R) — Four French nationals and five Iranians were injured when their helicopter crashed in northwestern Iran Sunday on a relief flight for Kurdish refugees. Their Chinook helicopter crash landed in the Kurdish border town of Sardasht, a teeming refugee centre. "All those on board are reportedly in satisfactory condition," the national news agency IRNA said. It did not identify the French nationals but said they included two doctors, a reporter and a relief worker.

Algerian contractors end strike

ALGIERS (R) — Private building contractors ended an eight-day strike over payment Sunday after discussing their grievances with the government. The stoppage had affected 7,000 building projects and laid off 80,000 employees. In a statement the General Union of Building Contractors (UGEA) "declares the strike is called off and urges its members to resume work immediately." It said the ministries of equipment and social affairs had shown understanding of their demands, which included the freezing of building material prices, payment of arrears and the abolition of a new tax.

Extreme leftist group kills two policemen in Turkey

ISTANBUL (R) — Gunmen shot dead two Turkish police officers in Istanbul Saturday, the left-wing extremist group Dev-Sol (Revolutionary Path) claimed responsibility.

It was the second time this weekend the group said it had struck. Dev-Sol claimed responsibility for the bombing of two private Turkish airline offices in Istanbul earlier on Saturday.

The policemen were killed as they sat in their car.

"Twenty empty cartridges were found on the spot. Apparently they were killed from almost point blank range," a police official told Reuters.

An anonymous caller to newspaper offices in Istanbul said the policemen were shot dead by Dev-Sol in revenge for the deaths of two of their members in a shootout with police in the Aegean port city of Izmir Friday.

"The assailants have fled after the shooting. Operations are continuing but there have been no arrests made so far," the police official said.

The semi-official Anatolian news agency said the squad car came under fire on a road in Istanbul's working class Gun-goren district and the officers were gunned down as they tried

to get out of the vehicle.

On Saturday the group said it attacked the two airlines which it accused of operating domestic flights to weaken a strike by workers of the state-run Turkish Airlines.

Dev-Sol, the most deadly extremist group active in Turkey, has claimed responsibility for at least a dozen killings of former police and military officials last year.

This year alone, the Marxist group said it was behind the killing of two American citizens in Turkey and a former Turkish general in his Istanbul home.

An offshoot of Turkey's first leftist extremist group of the late 1960s, the Dev-Genc (Revolutionary Youth), Dev-Sol was largely crushed together with other left and right-wing extremist groups by a 1980 military coup and three years of army rule.

Many of its leaders and members were tried and imprisoned after 1980. But a major jailbreak in Istanbul in 1987 set loose key Dev-Sol members.

During the Gulf war, the group said it was behind a score of bombings of U.S. and Western targets in Turkey to protest against the U.S.-led alliance's war with Iraq.

Egypt claims arrest of two 'Iraqi officers'

CAIRO (R) — Egyptian Interior Minister Mohammed Abdul Halim Musa said two Iraqi intelligence officers were arrested Saturday for plotting sabotage in Egypt. Mr. Musa refused to give details of the arrests when he spoke to reporters Saturday.

He said three Egyptians, two men and a woman suspected of belonging to an outlawed Egyptian Baath Party, were also held on Saturday. Police found \$38,000 in the Egyptians' possession, which they said had been given to them by the Iraqi leadership to carry out sabotage in Egypt, Mr. Musa said.

Egypt, which joined the U.S.-led coalition against Iraq in the Gulf war, has been on the alert for what it calls Iraqi-sponsored sabotage. The interior minister said members of more than 17 groups had also recently been arrested. He refused to specify how many had been held but said they had planned to assassinate ministers and public figures in Cairo. Those arrested were mainly Iraqis, Sudanese, Palestinians and Tunisians.

Mr. Musa said last month that dozens of Egyptians had been recruited by Iraqi intelligence

Gandhi defends India's neutrality in Gulf war

NEW DELHI (AP) — Former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, the front runner in India's May election, said Saturday he did not regret India's neutrality in the Gulf war, and any government he heads will keep an independent foreign policy.

"When another country is at war, we should remain non-aligned," he said, justifying India's withdrawal of refuelling rights to U.S. planes en route to the Gulf. The United States, he said, must understand that "India is a developing country. Our perspectives and our priorities have to be different."

Although he was not in office during the Gulf war, Mr. Gandhi was responsible for pressing Prime Minister Chandra Shekhar to raise objections to U.S. warplanes refuelling in India.

Mr. Gandhi also said he had no regrets about his unsuccessful trip to the Soviet Union and Iran, in which he had hoped to launch a mediation mission by nonaligned countries.

Critics accused the government, which Mr. Gandhi's congress party supported, of misreading the war and of being too uncritical of Iraqi President Saddam Hussein.

Mr. Gandhi spoke to foreign reporters on the spacious lawn of his official residence a day after the election commission announced the timing of parliamentary elections. They will be held May 20, 23 and 26, and the results will be announced May 31.

More than 500 million people are eligible to vote, making it the world's largest exercise in democracy.

Mr. Gandhi was prime minister for five years after the 1984 assassination of his mother, Indira Gandhi. In the 1989 elections, Congress remained the largest party, but it relinquished power to an alliance of smaller parties.

Since campaigning began four weeks ago, analysts say the Congress party's prospects have sharply improved. Mr. Gandhi confidently predicted winning a majority.

Signalling a shift in election tactics, he singled out prices as the key issue of the election campaign. Until now, congress has focused on the instability of the two minority governments which served briefly and resigned since Gandhi left office.



Rajiv Gandhi

"The economy has to be brought back on track," Mr. Gandhi said, hinting at greater liberalisation if his party returns to power.

India's inflation rose last year to 12 per cent from about 8 per cent, and some surveys say food prices rose by 20 per cent. Its cash reserves have sunk so low that it may default on loans for the first time since independence in 1947.

Mr. Gandhi criticised his two successors, V.P. Singh and Chandra Shekhar, for allowing India's international standing to slide. Both Mr. Singh and Chandra Shekhar have admitted having no experience and little interest in foreign affairs.

Mr. Gandhi also complained that the system of running the United Nations is "just not adequate," and said a revamping was needed. "The United Nations needs to be much more mobile," he said. India is a non-permanent member of the U.N. Security Council.

Italy (Continued from page 1) claimed, sharing the view that the four-party cabinet would survive only long enough to organise new elections.

"This new government is even weaker and more divided than the previous ones," said Achille Occhetto, the former Communist chief who leads the renamed Democratic Party of the Left. The Republicans deserted Mr. Andreotti at the last minute, protesting that he had broken a promise to let them keep the ministries they held in his previous government.

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

JORDAN TELEVISION

Tel: 77111-19

PROGRAMME TWO

18:00 Le Grand Bazar
19:00 News in French
19:15 Histoire de L'art
19:30 News in Hebrew
20:00 News in Arabic
20:30 The Golden Gate
21:10 Inside Story
22:00 News in English
22:20 Feature film: "El Dorado"

PRAYER TIMES

03:43 Fajr
05:04 (Sunrise) Duha
11:36 Dhur
15:12 Asr
18:08 Maghrib
19:28 Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church Sweifich Tel. 810740
Assemblies of God Church, Tel. 632785
St. Joseph Church Tel. 624590
Church of the Assumption Tel. 677440
De la Salle Church Tel. 661757
Terremata Church Tel. 623266
Church of the Assumption Tel. 623541
Anglican Church Tel. 623583, Tel. 625443
Armenian Catholic Church Tel. 771331
Armenian Orthodox Church Tel. 771351
Syrian Orthodox Church Tel. 771751
Assam International Church Tel. 685326
Evangelical Lutheran Church Tel. 811295

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints Tel. 815817, 654933
The Church of Nazareth Tel. 675691

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology.

A drop in temperatures will take place and some clouds will appear at different altitudes. In Aqaba, it will be fair and winds will be northerly moderate and seas calm.

Amman 12 / 22
Aqaba 17 / 30
Dheirra 11 / 24
Jordan Valley 15 / 26

Yesterday's high temperature: Amman 28, Aqaba 36. Humidity readings: Amman 28 per cent, Aqaba 15 per cent.

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

NIGHT DUTY

AMMAN:
Dr. Issam Al Asmar 890504
Dr. Awwad Hawash 777665
Dr. Zein Zaghlool 683591
Dr. Mohammad Shawish 638878
Firas pharmacy 661912
Al Asma pharmacy 670536
Nairook pharmacy 625672
Al Salam pharmacy 636730
Yacoub pharmacy 644945
Shmeisani pharmacy 637660
RIBD:
Dr. Mohamed Al Shara (-)
Dr. Al Shara's pharmacy 275825
ZARQA:
Dr. Rafeh Anallah (-)

Khalaf pharmacy 985417

EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre 637111
Civil Defence Department 661111
Civil Defence Immediate Response 630341
Civil Defence Emergency 199
Rescue Police 192, 621111, 677777
Fire Brigade 871228
Blood Bank 775121
Highway Police 843402
Traffic Police 896390
Public Security Department 600321
Hotel Complaints 605800
Price Complaints 661176
Water and Sewerage Complaints 897467
Amman Municipality 787111
Telephone Information (directory assistance) 121
Overse

Committee appeals for application of international legitimacy in Palestine

AMMAN (J.T.) — The Amman-based Palestinian Committee for the Problem of Immigration and Transfer has appealed to the European Community (EC) nations to help put an end to "hypocrisy and double standard" in dealing with the Palestinian human and political rights and invited the Europeans to use their good will and concerted efforts to end Soviet-Jewish immigration to the occupied Arab territories and refrain from financing that process.

"Immediate implementation of means and ways to protect Palestinians from Israeli collective punishment, cultural genocide and crimes against humanity is a first step towards the institutionalisation of respect of international conventions so as to ensure the Palestinian right to self-determination in their homeland," said the committee's chairperson Abdul Jawad Saleh in a message addressed to the EC summit meeting last week.

Mr. Saleh, a former mayor of the West Bank town of Al Birah and deported by the Israeli authorities, said that member states of the European summit who joined the "alliance" for implementing international legitimacy against Iraq, were not reacting as expected towards what is happening in the occupied Palestinian territories. He said the United States, together with European nations, were financing the Soviet immigration settling Jews on expropriated Palestinian lands.

Following is the text of the committee's message sent by Mr. Saleh to the European summit. Your summit meeting after the Gulf war, reminds one of the European meetings after World War I, with a major difference; that Europe is not any more the major player on the international arena.

However it also reminds one of the Western betrayal of the Arabs of that time who chose alliances with the Western powers against the Ottoman empire, as an instrument of a promised independence.

Instead of fulfilling their promise, the British and the French by the Sykes-Picot agreement divided the Arab Nation and their homeland into mandates, and both colonised major parts of the geographical unit inhabited by the Arabs. To make it worse, the British, had designated Palestine to be the future state of Israel, with absolute disregard to indigenous people of Palestine who were portrayed falsely in the declaration as a minority.

The ramifications of this colonial policy has put the whole area of the Middle East, as you like referring to it, on a wild volcano which has been erupting into revolutions, instability and wars which threatened world peace.

One persisting problem is the dehumanisation of the Palestine people which was articulated by the Balfour Declaration. They were perceived as an indivisible "minority" by the British, and are still considered as such by the Israelis and their Western allies. Their land is confiscated. Their institutions are destroyed. A cultural genocide is committed against them. War crimes are crimes against humanity are systematically launched against them.

Despite the fact that the Palestinians opted for a territorial compromise since 1974, when the 13th session of the Palestinian National Council (PNC), decided to establish a national authority on any areas evacuated by Israeli

forces, and again in 1988, when the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO), unequivocally adopted a peace initiative which recognises the state of Israel. Yet Israel inexorably defies "international legitimacy" and ignores these historical changes.

The Palestinian intifada, using non-violence with minor exceptions, did not move the Western powers into action to accommodate Palestinian aspirations. Their tremendous sacrifices — in the "infada's" first year alone, proportionally more Palestinians died (one person out of three to five thousand) than did U.S. soldiers in the decade-long military intervention in southeast Asia — did not constitute a catalyst among the Western powers to launch sanctions against Israel to convince the latter to establish peace in the area.

Member states of the European summit who joined the "alliance" for implementing "international legitimacy" against Iraq, are not reacting as expected towards what is happening in the Palestinian occupied territories. The scarce resources of land and water are usurped by the Israelis to undermine any peaceful solution which will provide the Palestinians with graveyards albeit an independent state. The European member states, and the United States are financing the Soviet Jewish immigration, who are being absorbed and settled on expropriated Palestinian lands. Ignoring and defying "international legitimacy" which calls for dismantling of Jewish settlements in the occupied territories and the return of Palestinian deportees, not to mention the Palestinian refugees who live in squalid camps dispersed all over the Arab World, begin the scapegoat and victims of massacres.

Adoption of double standards in dealing with the different crises and regional disputes will not only undermine Western credibility, but will lead to the reinstitutionalisation of a vanishing system of colonialism. The rule of the forest, of hegemony, will replace the rule of law, whether international or local.

Could the Palestinians be saved from despair? Could they expect concerted efforts from those who maintain the nobility of human rights principles towards implementing all United Nations resolutions pertaining to the Palestinian question as the only means to establish a just and comprehensive peace? Or, will the European summit advocate its efforts for dividing the spoils of the Gulf war, and declares a modern crusades war against the Arabs and Muslims. It seems there are no other options, besides a just peace, for all the parties concerned.

Since the Soviet authorities allowed Soviet Jews migration, under the pretext of human rights, the process of their absorption in Israel has been linked with the acceleration of building new settlement and fattening old ones in the occupied Palestinian territories. The process poses a serious threat to the Palestinians' right to self-determination in their homeland, undermining any peaceful settlement to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

Bridges timetable announced

AMMAN (Petra) — King Hussein and Prince Mohammad bridges on the River Jordan will be closed on Thursday, April 18, and will reopen on Friday morning, when they are receiving only 50 travellers each. The bridges will also admit 50 and 70 travellers over King Hussein and Prince Mohammad bridges respectively on Wednesday.

Study under way for better investment of Postal Savings Fund

AMMAN (J.T.) — Director General of the Post and Postal Savings Corporation Abdullah Al Jazi has said that the Postal Savings Fund was currently embarking on a study aimed at finding the best means for investing the fund's money, noting that the fund is currently giving loans to the corporation's staff.

"Once the fund has sufficient money, it will expand the scope of loans to cover all the Post and Postal Savings corporation," said Mr. Jazi in an interview with the Arabic daily Al Ra'i, published Saturday.

He said that the number of people depositing savings in the fund was around 265,000. Mr. Jazi also said that the corporation would start, as of June 1, collecting payments of electricity bills in the rural and remote areas, through its network of post offices, thus adding a new service to the corporation's services which include already applications for admission to universities and applications for jobs sent to the Civil Service Commission.

Mr. Jazi pointed out that the corporation would establish four post offices in Nuzha, Ras Al Ain, Natfif and Marrikh, thus bringing to 842 the number of post and postal savings offices.

"This means that every 3,571 citizens are served by one post office or postal saving office," Mr. Jazi said.

On the delay and loss of some letters, Mr. Jazi said that the average time a letter takes to get to its address is four and a half days, including 2.08 days in Jordan and 2.42 days in the country



Abdullah Al Jazi

of destination.

He warned citizens against enclosing cheques or cash in their letters, saying that such a measure is in violation of the International Postal Union rules.

Such cheques or cash can be sent by postal notes, he commented.

Mr. Jazi said that the letter, since its delivery to any post office, passes through various stages, including collection, sorting, distribution and transport.

Mr. Jazi said that the number of post office boxes in Jordan totalled 110,000. He added that the corporation last year handled 100 million postal material, including 36 million inside Jordan and 64 million outside Jordan.

On the premium mail, Mr. Jazi said the corporation handled 77,000 postal material exchanges with 29 countries. In the field of electronic mail, Mr. Jazi said that the corporation had put 20 fax machines at the disposal of citizens, saying that any citizen can send any message inside and outside Jordan by fax.

Indian organisation plans to build hospital in Iraq

By Odeh Odeh
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — A team representing the Indian charitable organisation AMURT is preparing to go to Iraq carrying further food supplies like sugar, milk, rice, cooking oil, and flour to the Iraqi people.

Ramanandh Avadutha, the team's leader, said that during the team's stay in Baghdad, its members will discuss the prospect of setting up a \$22 million hospital and will ship various quantities of medicine, clothing and blankets, weighing, 90 tonnes, to the Iraqi people.

AMURT, which stands for Ananda Marga Universal Relief Team, earlier distributed relief supplies in Jordan and Iraq in the wake of the Gulf war and during the Gulf crisis.

AMURT is described as an Indian organisation which bases its efforts on the ancient spiritual values of Hinduism.

Mr. Avadutha told the Jordan Times that his team aimed at alleviating the suffering of the Iraqi people and helping in the

reconstruction of the country. In Jordan, Mr. Avadutha said, his team distributed 1,000 packages of food supplies to Jordanian families that returned penniless from Kuwait.

He said that his team would be bringing in further quantities of food supplies to the Jordanian expatriates and would distribute the supplies in cooperation with the General Union of Voluntary Societies (GUVS).

According to Mr. Avadutha, AMURT plans to set up an orphanage, a hospital and a home for the elderly in Iraq, and hopes to set up a permanent office in Jordan to organise the distribution of aid in Jordan, which took the brunt of the Gulf crisis consequences, as well as in Iraq itself.

"Our motto is 'service to humanity is service to God,'" said Mr. Avadutha in an earlier interview with the Jordan Times.

He said that Jordan was not the only country in the region to receive aid from his organisation which has branches worldwide and is doing all it can to offer assistance to the needy.

UNDRO closes Amman office

AMMAN (J.T.) — The United Nations Disaster Relief Organisation (UNDRO) will close its offices in Amman as of Monday, April 15, according to a press release issued by Gerhard Morier, acting United Nations emergency manager in Jordan. The press release noted that contacts on the implementation of the regional humanitarian plan of action related to the Gulf crisis can be channelled through the United Nations Resident Coordinator and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Resident Representative Ali Attia.

Ministry admits faulty processing of scholarships, says it will revise them

AMMAN (J.T.) — The Ministry of Higher Education Sunday admitted that an oversight in processing the huge number of applications for this year's scholarships was behind the outcry among the students who were deprived of a chance for scholarships to ensure their higher education.

Ministry of Higher Education Secretary General Ahmad Al Bashairah said in a statement to the Jordan News Agency, Petra, that the ministry had offered the applicants questionnaires requesting them to give accurate information about their general conditions so that it can help those in need to acquire a scholarship.

"We assumed that the students had submitted correct information because a clear statement in the application said that the students bear full responsibility for any incorrect information," Dr. Bashairah noted.

"We, in fact, followed a practice adopted by the Income Tax Department, which allows each person to voluntarily give information about his or her income for taxation purposes, but not all the 2,000 students abided by the rule and gave correct information, and the ministry will now have to revise the applications," Dr. Bashairah said.

The ministry official was in fact replying to an outcry raised by students in the local press accusing the ministry of granting the scholarships this year to those who were not in need or those who have influential relatives that secured the scholarships for them.

"I am not revealing a secret when I say that mistakes have been committed, but they constitute a limited margin," Dr. Bashairah said. However, he added, although the student him-

self bears the responsibility for the information he supplies in the questionnaire, this does not absolve the Ministry of Higher Education from its responsibility.

He said that the ministry planned to follow stricter systems from now on in processing the applications. Minister of Higher Education Saeed Al Tal said that the ministry had been in the habit of granting scholarships only to those who excelled in the tawjihi examination, but this year, and in view of the difficult economic conditions, the ministry decided to give part of this chance to students from needy families.

The Ministry of Education had in the previous years granted scholarships to some 1,800 students annually, in various specialisations, mostly at Jordanian universities, but the number became 1,260 and was cut to 1,000 this year.

According to the minister, the first 600 scholarships went to those with the higher grades in their tawjihi results, and out of the remaining 400 seats, given to the needy students, only 370 were granted by the Ministry of Finance for lack of funds.

"The ministry cannot please all people and there will always be protests against any decisions concerning the scholarships, since many students are in need and are entitled to scholarships, but the ministry's means are very limited, Mr. Tal said.

Some of the complaints aired by the students in the press mentioned that the Ministry of Higher Education had given preference to the wealthy students and those who completed their secondary studies at private schools. They also said that many of the scholarships went to some of those whose mark was 65 out of 100.

IOM outlines operations

AMMAN (J.T.) — The International Organisation for Migration (IOM) Sunday issued a statement outlining an update of its operations over the past two months and noting that it is now facing immediate cash flow problems which impede its working plans to provide assistance to the evacuees from the Gulf region.

Following is the IOM statement:

The dramatic exodus from northern Iraq into Turkey and Iran has led to a major revision of the regional humanitarian plan of action. IOM remains responsible for inland transportation of all persons arriving in Iran, Jordan, Syria and Turkey from Iraq and Kuwait, which translates into significant demands on IOM's staff and financial resources. Meanwhile, the flow of third country nationals from Iraq and Kuwait continues, although at a slower rate.

Between March 28 and April 10, 1991, IOM arranged the repatriation of 3,110 foreign residents of Iraq and Kuwait in need of international assistance (2,856 Egyptians, 79 Sudanese, 94 Sri Lankans, 24 Yemenis and 57 persons of other nationalities). Under the second phase of the General Evacuation Programme, IOM has assisted a grand total of 37,336 persons to return to their countries of origin.

Concerning financing, by April 10 confirmed pledges toward

IOM's requirements under the plan of action had surpassed 16.7 million, of which just over \$10.4 million had been received. Total commitments to date are estimated at some \$18.7 million, against which invoices for over \$16.7 million have been received and settled by IOM.

IOM faces immediate cash-flow problems and again urges donors to pay already-announced pledges as soon as possible. The need for additional resources to respond to the new situation in Turkey and Iran is urgent. IOM appeals to the international community for quick action to ensure that international assistance to those fleeing Iraq can be delivered as rapidly as possible.

More relief supplies are sent to Iraq

AMMAN (J.T.) — A team representing the Arab American doctors in the United States is due here on April 28 in the course of a tour that will take the team members also to Iraq to study the general condition of people in the two countries in the wake of the Gulf war.

Jordan National Red Crescent Society (JNRCS) Vice-President Muhammad Mitaq Al Hadid, who made the announcement, said that the team would be led by Dr. Irfan Al Hani who conveyed to him the fact that his group had donated \$100,000 to the Iraqi people to alleviate their sufferings resulting from the American-led aggression, \$20,000 to the JNRCS to help finance its humanitarian activities, and \$10,000 to Lebanon.

The 12-member team, all doctors and specialists, will hold talks with the Iraqi and the Jordanian Red Crescent Societies officials, Mr. Hadid said.

He said that the team would purchase \$50,000 worth of medical supplies and the rest will be used to buy flour for the Iraqi people.

Dr. Hani told Mr. Hadid in a message that his group would examine the health condition of people in Baghdad, Karbala, Al

Hilleh, Al Basra, Kirkuk and Mosul.

The same group had earlier offered donations for the purchase of vaccines for children sent to Iraq through the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), Dr. Hadid said.

Dr. Hadid voiced appreciation to the Arab American doctors for their humanitarian gesture.

Also Sunday, a convoy of trucks laden with medicine and food supplies was sent to Iraq from Amman by the Arab Emergency Health Committee.

Dr. Ibrahim Abu Hamid, member of the committee, said that the trucks carried 180 tonnes of medicines, children milk and other food supplies for the Iraqi people. Dr. Abu Hamid also announced that the committee had received JD 8,000 in contributions collected by the trade unions in Aqaba to be used to send relief supplies to Iraq.

The committee chairman, Dr. Mousa Abu Hamid, left for Baghdad on a several day visit during which he will tour hospitals and give token gifts to the patients on behalf of the Arab committee which was set up by the Arab Health Ministers Council.

Dr. Mousa Abu Hamid said he

would meet Iraqi officials and discuss the general health conditions and needs of the Iraqi people.

Meanwhile, three Royal Jordanian (RJ) planes, chartered by UNICEF and carrying \$480,000 worth of medicine and medical supplies destined for Iraq, will arrive at Queen Alia International Airport on three different days later this week. The supplies will then be transported by land to Iraq. The supplies include diagnostic lab equipment for cholera, antibiotics, syringes, needles, Oral Rehydration Solution (ORS), and meningitis vaccine, as measures to contain epidemics which threaten to break out in Iraq.

On Saturday, April 13, UNICEF transported by five Jordanian trucks 15 tonnes of liquid chlorine and 100 tonnes of aluminium sulphate to Baghdad to help Iraqi authorities in water-purification services.

UNICEF had earlier dispatched 143 tonnes of essential drugs and medical supplies and equipment since February 16, when a joint UNICEF/WHO team visited Iraq to assess the needs of children, women and the aged, in response to a request made by the U.N. secretary general.

Victimised Jordanians handed over to embassy

From Serene Halasa in Iraq

EIGHT JORDANIANS, victims of acts of vengeance in Kuwait, where handed over to the Jordanian Embassy in Baghdad Thursday. The victims long-time residents of Kuwait, were accused of collaborating with the Iraqis and were severely tortured for twelve hours at the hands of Kuwaiti mobs before they were taken to prison in Saudi Arabia.

Subbi M. Abdul Aziz, 29 was taken along with two other Jordanians while they were on their way to a local supermarket in Kuwait City. "We stopped at a Kuwaiti checkpoint, and when the soldiers saw that we were Jordanians he hurried us out of the car," Abdul Aziz recalled. "Without being accused of anything, they started interrogating us," he added.

"We were stripped naked and thrown to the ground. Then they (Kuwaitis) started shooting around us to scare us," Abdul Aziz said.

A long time to come.

"They whipped me with chains, broke my arm and nose, burnt me with cigarette butts and hot coal, punched me and cursed me," Abdul Aziz said.

Another victim, Basel Abdul Kareem Saeed, 26, had gas poured on his body and hair. "They set it on fire, and immediately put the fire in my hair out," he recalled bitterly. Saeed was severely beaten, his nose was broken and he lost the ability to hear with his right ear.

The youngest of the group, Tareq Ibrahim Ali Hussein, 15, was the most severely tortured. The shy boy recalled what had happened to him saying: "They stripped me naked and started beating me. Two would hold me while another two beat me. They kept taking turns doing that. 'The severity of Hussein's beatings rendered him blind for three days. Today Hussein cannot see properly with his left eye. The three were then thrown into a bus to later join three other Jordanian prisoners."

"When they opened the back door of the bus there was blood

everywhere. I remember thinking whoever is in there is definitely dead," Bassem Mamduh Abdul Hamid, another victim said.

Abdul Hamid, 23, along with two others: Raed Abdul Fattah, 24, and Abdul Fatah Omar, 21, also received merciless beatings and were tortured.

"They kept beating me with everything they could get their hands on, whips chains even a hatchet," Abdul Fattah said.

"When they first rounded us up they stripped us naked in public and had women, whom we have never seen before, accuse us of sexually assaulting them," he bitterly recalled.

"They also told us to run as they started chasing us in their cars and sometimes they actually hit us," Abdul Hamid added.

"See this? This is a cigarette butt," Abdul Fatah said pointing to a scar on his right shoulder. "See this also? They pulled out my finger nail," he added showing his injured finger.

The last two to join the group were 19-year-old Ghassan Al Khathib, and 21-year-old Saud

Muhammad Sheik Abed.

Al Khathib was thrown into a ditch and except for his head, was totally covered with sand. "They would walk past me and kick me on the head," he said. "They pulled me out afterwards, tied my hands behind my back and put two 50-kilo sand bags on my back. They made me stand like that for two hours under the sun," he added.

As if that was not enough torture, Ghassan was untied and beaten up, after which the Kuwaitis threw him on the ground and dragged him around. "I could not talk or move for a week," he said.

After twelve hours of physical torture in Kuwait, the eight prisoners were taken to prison camps in Saudi Arabia. "There we were mentally abused by high-ranking Saudi and Egyptian officers who cursed and humiliated us," Abdul Aziz said.

Dressed in blue overalls, the eight victims, taken prisoners merely for being Jordanians, have lost all contact with family members who remained in Kuwait. "My whole family is still in Kuwait. My wife just gave

birth to my third child; he is only 45-days-old and I know nothing about him, and they know nothing about me," Abdul Aziz, who broke down in tears, said. "All of us here have lost contact with our families. I am sure they caught my brother and tortured him as well," Abdul Fattah said with resignation.

A month after their capture, the eight Jordanians were included with Iraqi prisoners of war who were released during the exchange of POWs.

We arrived in Baghdad with nothing, no IDs, no money, nothing except for the clothes on our backs," Abdul Fattah said.

"The Iraqis treated us wonderfully, and so did our embassy who sent an envoy to check on us the day we arrive to make sure we were looked after," Abdul Hamid said.

After a brief rest at the embassy, the eight victims were taken by the Red Crescent in order to make arrangements for their transfer to Jordan. "God willing we will go to Amman, and from there we will start a search for members of our families," Abdul Aziz bitterly concluded.

Feast to be celebrated with gunfire

AMMAN (J.T.) — Guns will be fired in celebration of the coming Eid Al Fitr feast, during the first and the second days of the feast, in all the country's governorates, according to an announcement here Saturday.

The announcement said that the guns would be fired

once the feast is declared and during the five prayers of the day.

The Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources announced that it would arrange for all the main streets of the country to be lit during the coming holiday to help facilitate traffic

and reduce the possibility of accidents.

The statement said that the lights that were put off during the Gulf crisis, when the country adopted energy conservation measures, would be put on again and the energy conservation measures would end.

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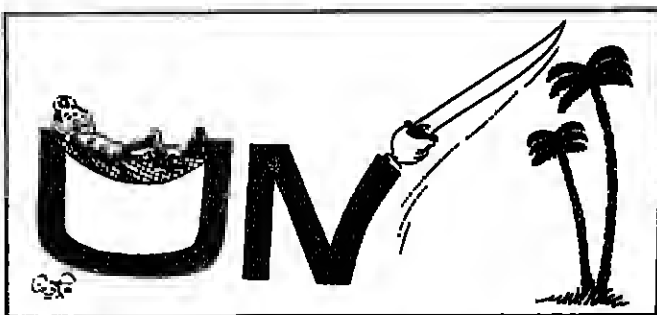
Dialogue vs bullets

LEBANESE PRIME Minister Omar Karami's pledge that the Beirut government would not use force to disarm militias and Palestinian fighters in the country in its drive for peace comes as a reassuring note amid signs that the state of peace is being consolidated there. Having seen the government come this far in moving steadily to eliminate perennial symptoms of violence, it is gladdening to note that it has opted for the path of dialogue to resolve problems rather than pick up the gun at the first sign of trouble.

Of course, that is not to say that the problems of Lebanon are simple as that. The country's woes are a manifestation of the Palestinian problem and the overall Arab-Israeli conflict and are intertwined with foreign armed presence. There cannot be any "final" peace in the country as long as the foreign armed presence remains; it was only natural that the Lebanese government appealed for Syrian and Egyptian intervention with U.S. Secretary of State James Baker to pressure Israel into withdrawing its forces from South Lebanon in implementation of U.N. Resolution 425. The Iranian Revolutionary Guards in the Bekaa Valley would have no reason (technically at least) to cite for their continued presence once the Israelis leave. The military presence in the country of Syrians and Palestinians is an inter-Arab affair, which could be sorted out once the Israelis and Iranians pack up and get out.

In the same vein, there is no need for the Palestinian people to maintain an armed presence in the south of the country if their root problem is solved.

Having said that, it is no easy process that confronts Lebanon, which has been indirectly paying the price for the lingering Palestinian question. But that does not mean that peace for Lebanon has to await a solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The small, beautiful country with its industrious people need peace, calm and serenity to put the past behind them and rebuild their lives in a spirit of reconciliation. Dialogue, instead of bullets, should be the way to achieve that objective.



ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

Through the Masri-Baker meeting in Geneva, Jordan has renewed its call for the implementation of U.N. Security Council resolutions 242 and 338 to ensure a lasting settlement for the Palestine problem, said Al Ra'i Arabic daily Sunday. Only through the exchange of peace for land and the restoration of Palestinian national rights can just peace be established, said the paper. In addition, Mr. Masri made it clear that only the international peace conference can serve as the best forum for implementing the council resolutions and achieve peace for all parties in the region, the paper noted. Reaffirming that Jordan can serve as no substitute for the PLO in any future negotiations, the paper said that Jordan is keen on preserving the rights of the Palestinian people who should participate in full in the peace-making process which must take place under U.N. auspices and with the participation of the major powers to guarantee the peace and security of the region. With this statement, Mr. Masri has thus reaffirmed Jordan's position which is in line with that of the majority of the Arab states, and has thus aborted Israel's drive to push the Arabs towards a regional rather than an international parity. The paper said that Jordan is keen on maintaining solidarity among Arab states, not only in internal Arab affairs, but also with regard to the main issue: the Arab-Israeli conflict. But it said close Arab contacts and consultations are now needed to give further impetus to the joint effort towards peace and to avoid capitulation to the common enemy.

A columnist in Al Ra'i Arabic daily criticises Iran for its post war behaviour vis-a-vis its neighbour, Iraq, and says that the Iranian leaders adopted a hostile attitude towards Baghdad in the wake of the U.S.-led aggression that brought about devastation to Iraqi cities. Tareq Masarweh says that during the aggression a great number of Iraqi war and civilian planes took refuge in Iran and everybody in Iraq, Jordan and other parts of the world believed that these aircraft will be returned to Iraq as soon as the war is over, but the war has long been over and the planes have not returned, the writer notes. Furthermore, the Iranian leaders now say that only 23 planes took refuge in Iran, and they would be returned but did not give any date, the writer points out. Instead of returning the planes to Iraq, the Iranian leaders have sent trouble makers across the border in order to carry out the remaining part of the conspiracy concocted against Iraq earlier, the writer adds. He says that the aim of the trouble makers was to destroy whatever remained of Iraq's demographic and geographic infrastructure to transform the country into another Lebanon. The writer says such behaviour and such underhand dealings will cost the Iranians their credibility in their relations with their neighbouring countries.

Baker takes small step on long road to Mideast peace

By Alan Elsner
Reuters

WASHINGTON — In the history of Middle East peace-making, progress has been measured in small, painful steps and interrupted by frequent reverses.

Seen in those terms, U.S. Secretary of State James Baker's latest Middle East peace mission could be accounted a success. He took a small, painful step forward, but the road ahead remains long and hard.

Baker's success in talks with leaders of Israel, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Syria and Jordan was to focus everyone's attention on a concept — a Middle East peace conference of some kind that would transform the dynamics of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

"Once you get everyone around the table in direct negotiations, the whole atmosphere and situation may change," said one U.S. official.

Baker himself sees such a meeting as "breaking taboos" that have always prevented Arabs from talking with Israel and Israelis with Palestinians.

But even if Arabs and Israelis are now talking about talks, the talks each side has in mind are not necessarily the same.

Israel wants a regional conference that would exclude the United Nations and countries like Britain and France which it sees as intrinsically biased in favour of the other side.

It wants a meeting without preconditions and certainly not one based on the ideals of Security Council Resolution 242 and 338 which call for Israel to trade occupied land for a secure peace.



Egypt, Jordan and Saudi Arabia are willing to consider a regional meeting as long as everyone agrees that the end result will be modelled on 242 and 338.

Syria wants a conference with a significant U.N. role based on the same resolutions. It is no longer calling for an

"international conference under U.N. auspices" and U.S. officials say its policy is in a state of some flux.

Baker's job now is to meld these differing conceptions into a compromise acceptable to all. A first step, as he indicated last week, would be to jettison the emotive rhetoric

that has already attached itself to the title of the conference.

"The adjective you put in front of the word 'conference,' it seems to me is not anywhere near as important as whether or not the parties truly want to sit down and meet and have direct negotiations for peace," he said.

Baker, who has a rare nose for a deal, will likely spend the next several days trying to craft a formula for a conference that all can live with, before returning to the Middle East to test it on the parties.

But then he will run into the next big obstacle — who represents the Palestinians?

Israel wants only representatives acceptable to it and nobody from East Jerusalem or outside the territories.

The Palestinians themselves are desperate for negotiations to ease their worsening plight in the territories but also want to keep the Palestine Liberation Organisation, symbol of their national pride and aspirations, in the game.

Arab states like Egypt and Saudi Arabia seem to have turned against the PLO and are no longer financing it. But they are far from ready to agree to Israel's maximum offer of local autonomy powers for the Palestinians.

Then there are the Israeli settlements in the territories. The United States calls them an obstacle to peace but Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir says they are none of America's business and have nothing to do with the peace process.

One diplomat who has seen several attempts at Mideast peacemaking come and go, likens the process to the popular children's electronic video games.

"The prospective peacemaker is like the little man in the video game who has to overcome constant sniping from those who would stop him in his tracks or zap him with death rays," said the diplomat.

"If he succeeds, he advances to the next level of the game, where the same thing happens again."

Baker is a good player and he may have nursed his fledgling peace process through the first level.

But there are plenty of people out there waiting to zap it with death rays as he progresses to the next stage.

Iran's expansionist dream

By Rowland Evans
and
Robert Novak

INTELLIGENCE reports reaching here claim that thousands of Iranian Revolutionary Guards, heavily armed, have infiltrated Iraq since early March to further Iran's expansionist dream of a Shi'ite fundamentalist state in southern Iraq and threaten George Bush's plans for the Gulf.

These border crossings have not yet been fully confirmed, because the U.S. intelligence community lacks proof from eyewitness agents. But the People's Mujahadeen, Iranian dissidents who oppose Tehran's mullahs and are organized into military units in Iraq, have eyewitness evidence of cross-border combat. They have captured and interviewed revolutionary guards, some of whom are disguised in Kurdish costume.

Here, then, is one more unintended consequence of President Bush's brilliant military triumph over Saddam Hussein. While the eyes of the world are fixed on more than one million Kurds facing devastation along Iraq's northern borders, in the South, Iran sows seeds of influence with Saddam-hating Shi'ites.

Western intelligence experts suspect that Tehran has attempted to obscure these actions by floating stories of imminent release, which never takes place, of American hostages in Lebanon. Meanwhile, Iran enlarges its political power for what it has long been plotting: establishment of a pro-Tehran Shi'ite state that would encompass a large part of Iraq, with its capital in the Shi'ite stronghold of Karbala. There goes the Gulf's balance of power.

The Revolutionary Guards, Iran's mainstay in its eight-year war with Iraq, were ordered to border areas when the U.S.-led coalition opened fire in January. Thousands of guards took over regular military camps close to the Iraqi frontier. They first crossed the border, in battalion strength, in early March at points ranging from near Basra in the south all the way up to the Kurdish region near Irbil and the Turkish border.

The guards' initial military orders were to attack the camps of the Mujahadeen. But interviews with captured guards suggest Tehran is interested in long-range destabilization inside Iraq.

Asked why he was not wearing his regular uniform, a captured militiaman from the guards' armored engineering battalion said he was "not allowed to even wear khaki uniform, no military uniform at all. They told us that if we were captured by Iraqi or Mujahadeen forces, we should deny that we are even Iranians. We were told to wear local dress, jaffi, like the Kurdish."

Simultaneously, hints poured out of Tehran of the long-sought release of American hostages held by Iranian-connected terrorists in Lebanon. As viewed by intelligence experts, this may have been used as a cover to reduce attention to illegal border crossings.

After deliberately building up Western expectations for a quick hostage release, Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Velayati suddenly switched signals. He told Radio Tehran that a "dead end" had been reached. Why? Because, he claimed with stunning illogic, Lebanese groups that have released hostages in the past "gained nothing from the United States." That statement is

taken by specialists as proof that the winks and nods of earlier hostage-release hints attempted to conceal from the world the massive border crossings.

Even if the hostage promise was a cruel hoax, Bush has few options for dealing with Iran's new machinations in Iraq. "The United States is quiet about what it suspects Iran is doing, because otherwise it would have to react, and there is no easy reaction," a congressional intelligence source told us.

He ridiculed Tehran-inspired reports that there truly is a new Iran under President Hashemi Rafsanjani. "We can't afford to believe that," he said, conjuring memories of the Iran-contra fiasco.

What is afoot in the Gulf indeed is duplicity and trickery, in sharp contrast to the straightforward valor of U.S. fighting forces. It is no longer so easy to tell who are the bad guys, who are the good. The Revolutionary Guards disguised as Kurdish freedom fighters are out of place in the new world order. — The Washington Post.

Saddam

(Continued from page 1)

Iraq to make a new start.

"Our country has to become prosperous once again, confident in itself, confident in the loyalty of its men and women and all that has happened will become stories of the past."

The Baghdad newspapers pictured the president praying at a mosque and talking to officials at Erbil, the administrative capital of Iraqi Kurdistan. They also showed him in front of a crowd at Mosul, Iraq's third largest city.

Visits by foreign journalists to Erbil and to Sulaimaniya, the cradle of Kurdish nationalism further to the east near the border with Iran, suggested that refugees had started to filter back home in the past few days.

But there was no sign of a mass return from the mountains and the borders with Iran and Turkey.

Local officials told journalists in Erbil on Saturday that up to 50,000 people had returned. They said in Sulaimaniya on Thursday that up to 25,000 had come back.

Kurds form about 20 per cent of Iraq's 18 million people. Another report said officials of the Kurdistan autonomous region had declared that 40,000 to 50,000 families had returned since the government's amnesty announcement early this month.

The government, trying to win back the confidence of the peo-

ple, extended the amnesty on Thursday for one week for people still inside the country and two weeks for those outside.

The amnesty, for everyone who took part in the rebellion except for "acts of murder, rape or theft which took place under the conditions of the incidents of rioting and treachery," originally was to expire last Friday.

Iraqi Kurdish rebels charged Sunday that government forces were still attacking rebel-held areas and refugees in northern Iraq and appealed for United Nations protection for civilians.

A Shiite opposition group reported continued hit-and-run attacks by insurgents in southern Iraq. Both reports could not be independently confirmed.

The Iraqi News Agency said Sunday the governor of the southern province of Basra had met a delegation from the International Committee of the Red Cross.

The rebellion in the south began in the port of the same name, which was heavily bombed in the Gulf war.

The agency said Latif Hammd told the delegation about the effects of the "U.S.-Atlantic aggression" and of looting and sabotage.

Mr. hammd said electricity had been restored in most areas and pure water networks were working at full capacity.

The agency said the Red Cross team was part of a mission to provide medical aid and install water treatment equipment.

The Iranian government appealed to the world and its own people on Sunday to ease the desperate plight of Iraqi refugees.

"(The refugees) have left their hearths and homes, their homeland, and have come to partake of our hospitality and selflessness," Tehran Radio said.

"Words cannot express the depth of this disaster. Please help the Iraqi refugees."

The United Nations' top refugee coordinator arrived in the Iranian capital and said 50 tonnes of badly-needed food supplies had been sent to Iran.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Sadako Ogata, said more aid was being flown to Iran, which says the world has ignored its refugee problem and concentrated on a similar exodus to Turkey, a U.S. Gulf war ally.

The European Community said Saturday it was donating enough bread, lentils and vegetable oil to feed 600,000 of Iraq's Kurdish refugees on mountains along the Iranian and Turkish borders for two months.

Marc Pierini, the official coordinating the EC's relief effort, told journalists the community would also provide medical help, 10,500 family-sized tents and 237,500 blankets.

Ms. Ogata arrived in Iran Saturday.

The U.N. official said, if allowed, she would visit Baghdad.

The Supreme National Defence Council, Iran's highest de-

fence body, called Saturday for a major world effort, in concert with the Iraqi government, to get the refugees home.

Poll

(Continued from page 1)

This year, 1,131 Israeli Jews were polled during the last two weeks in March, and results had a margin of error of plus or minus three per cent, analysts said. There are more than 3.7 million Jews in Israel. The survey did not question any of the country's 840,000 Israeli-Arabs.

The split in the Jewish public over how to proceed towards peace could be seen in answers to a question on how they would solve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Thirty-six per cent of the respondents favoured some form of "annexation," while 35 per cent called for returning all or part of the occupied territories as part of a peace agreement. Twelve per cent favoured the status quo, and 17 per cent called for limited autonomy, as the government has proposed.

In contrast, 64 per cent were not willing to return any of the Golan Heights.

A total of 91 per cent surveyed this year supported the development of nuclear weapons, up from 78 per cent in 1987. Readiness to use such weapons was up to 88 per cent this year, compared with 53 per cent five years earlier.

LETTERES

A giant step backwards

To the Editor:

NOAM CHOMSKY'S article, "The weak shall inherit nothing," (the Jordan Times, April 3, 91) crystallises many other authors' thoughts on the new cynicism permeating U.S. government policy. Politics in practice have always been exploitative and racist, but they have usually been disguised as necessary evils essential to the eventual benefit of everyone involved. Now, there is no attempt to hide the equation that brute force will conquer. No apologies are offered. Acceptance of force is the only viable alternative. However, if this is the new morality, publicly flaunted, what will happen to our court system, corporate responsibilities and international business ethics? We are headed for a state of anarchy, a time of lawlessness, and a negation of religious teachings and humanitarianism. Perhaps a line could be drawn separating government and individual actions. Corporations would have their own individual codes, depending upon how much they could contribute to government power. This new world order would be a giant step backwards for humanity.

(Mrs.) Judith Abu Jabar
P.O. Box 950392
Amman.

Shamir

(Continued from page 1)

details. Mr. Shamir played down Housing Minister Ariel Sharon's promises to step up Jewish settlement building in the occupied territories.

He said Mr. Sharon was doing nothing without government approval, and added "there is more publicity here than facts."

Construction in the occupied territories "continues all the time, it is natural. There is life there, so there is development," Mr. Shamir said.

Asked if he was aware of all Mr. Sharon's settlement plans, Mr. Shamir replied: "I don't have to go into details, if you are constructing one house or two houses it doesn't require special permission of the government and it does not have to come to my knowledge."

Led by Mr. Sharon, cabinet critics claim Israel's proposals expose it to pressure for "territorial concessions."

Mr. Sharon has also accused Mr. Shamir of making decisions without consulting with his ministers, but he is thought to be far from voicing a majority of views in the 20-man cabinet.

Foreign Minister Levy rebuked the hardline cabinet colleagues for their criticism, saying that "no government in the world can accept" such opposition from within.

"That ministers in the government should attack the government and portray it as having sold out the country... this is irresponsible," Mr. Levy told reporters after the weekly cabinet session.

"The government cannot be divided into those who are 'pre-people' and those who are 'abandoning the people and the country'," Mr. Levy added.

In agreeing to a regional conference, Israel and the United

States had "removed land mines" on the road to peace, Levy said. On settlement, Mr. Levy said: "No one promised to stop construction in (the West Bank) and Gaza. No Israeli government..."

"Our right cannot be challenged. There is one difference — don't upset the whole world," he said.

Pullout

(Continued from page 1)

forces would remain in the demilitarised zone until the U.N. observer unit takes over. A spokesman for the U.N. observer group, Joachim Hutter, said Sunday that he could not when that would be.

"In light of Iraqi acceptance of United Nations Security Council Resolution 687 and the 'commencement of the deployment of the U.N. observer unit to the demilitarised zone, coalition forces will begin withdrawing from their current positions in Iraq south of the Euphrates River and start moving south to the demilitarised zone established by the U.N. resolution," the communiqué said.

The central command said the United States will continue to fly combat air patrols to protect allied land forces along the demilitarised strip.

Nearly 30,000 Iraqi refugees remain in the Safwan area, five kilometres inside Iraq near the Kuwait border, and at another camp in the town of Rafha, which is outside the demilitarised zone.

A 500-man French helicopter squadron, based near the town of Salman, is believed to be the only non-American unit of the Gulf war allies in the area. There was no word on when they would withdraw.

The commander of the U.N. force due to patrol the demilitarised zone, Austrian Lieutenant-General Günther Grendl, arrived in Kuwait Saturday. He held talks on Sunday with the Emir

An uneasy truce in DFLP awaiting the verdict at PCC

By P.V. Vivekanand
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — A de facto truce appeared to have taken effect between the two feuding factions in one of the largest and influential Palestinian groups, the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP), pending the convening of the Palestine Central Council (PCC), which will meet in Tunis on April 21.

The halt in the war of words between DFLP leader Nayef Hawatmeh and his erstwhile close aide Yasser Abed Rabbo offers a respite to the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO), which itself is facing an uphill struggle against American-Israeli attempts to marginalise its role in the Middle East peace process.

The split in the DFLP, the third largest faction in the PLO after Fatah and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), is seen by many observers as rooted in political differences but turned more personal between Damascus-based Hawatmeh and Tunis-based Abed Rabbo, who is also a member of the PLO Executive Committee.

The simmering conflict emerged to the surface and was fought in the open since last month when Mr. Hawatmeh, founder and secretary-general of the Marxist-oriented group, sent an official request in behalf of the DFLP Central Committee addressed to PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat designating Tayseer Khaleel as observer in the PLO Executive Committee regardless of Mr. Abed Rabbo's membership in the 15-man panel.

The speaker of the Palestine National Council (PNC), the policymaking body of the Palestinian movement, has accepted the DFLP nomination, but rejected a bid by Mr. Hawatmeh to replace Mr. Abed Rabbo in the Executive Committee saying that any appointment or replacement of PLO executives will have to be made by the PNC as and when it meets next, sources close to the PLO said.

The Palestine Central Committee, which liaises between the PNC and the Executive Committee, will discuss the DFLP feud and decide whether to call a PNC meeting, according to the sources.

"Whether or not the rivals will formalise their split into Hawatmeh and Abed Rabbo camps depends on the decision of the Central Committee," said one of the sources. "The committee has to decide whether to accept Mr. Hawatmeh's request, which implies a convocation of the PNC, or reject it saying the PNC will meet as and when the normal course of events warrants," the source said.

Political observers said Mr. Hawatmeh, whose supporters control most key positions within the DFLP hierarchy — including finances — appeared to be in a better position to retain the leadership of the hardcore members of the faction if Mr. Abed Rabbo decides to form his own group.

Both camps are maintaining that they have the support of a majority in the 61-member Central Committee of the DFLP, and both use the official stationery and stamps of the committee in their communications. Abed Rabbo supporters claim that they have the support of nine of the 11 Central Committee members from the occupied West Bank and Gaza — "the Palestinian constituency that matters" — as one Abed Rabbo supporter put it.

The DFLP leads all other factions in terms of support from Palestinian women's movements. Ms. Zuhaira Kamal, the senior-most Palestinian woman activist in the occupied territories, is reported to be an ardent supporter of Mr. Abed Rabbo, but Hawatmeh supporters argue that such support stems from Mr. Abed Rabbo's status as a PLO executive who can influence top-level decisions.

The Hawatmeh-Abed Rabbo split has been marked by accusations and counter-accusations, stripping of each other of DFLP positions and expulsion of each other from the group.

The feud dates back to August 1988, when the rivals clashed over strategy towards the Palestinian uprising which had begun eight months ago in the occupied territories. However, they decided to bury the differences when various PLO factions, buoyed by riding the wave of the intifada,



Nayef Hawatmeh



Yasser Abed Rabbo

gner together, convened the PNC and mapped out a new strategy, which was transformed into a peace initiative based on a two-state solution.

All PLO factions, except those dissident wings openly supported by Syria, accepted the initiative. (Although the DFLP and the PFLP are based in Syria, analysts say that it would not be fair to categorise them as open supporters of the Syrian line of thinking). In fact, the DFLP and PFLP were reserving the right to voice their objections to the course that the PLO leadership might adopt when they assumed seats in the Executive Committee, according to PLO observers.

A senior PLO official stepped into the fray this week with a castigating attack on both sides of the DFLP.

"At a time when the PLO is the target of a concerted campaign led by the U.S. and Israel to marginalise its role, here we have a factional struggle for power and titles," said the official on condition of anonymity. "The entire future of the Palestinian liberation struggle is at stake, and we can do without any fight among ourselves," he added angrily.

Factional splits have always been a hallmark of the PLO. Almost every faction of the organisation has been split at least once: The DFLP as well as the PFLP-GC led by Ahmad Jibril are breakaway groups from the PFLP; Fatah was splintered in 1983 with Colonel Saad Musa heading a rival Fatah-Uprising group based in Damascus in addition to the dissident Fatah Revolutionary Council led by Sabri al Banna (Abu Nidal); the Palestine Liberation Front (PLF) has two wings — one based in Iraq and led by Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Abbas) and the other based in Damascus and led by supporters of the late Talaat Yagoubi.

According to DFLP sources, one of the key reasons behind the split involves the status of the Jordan Democratic Party, which was set up by DFLP supporters. "While Mr. Abed Rabbo argues that the Jordan Democratic Party should be a totally independent Jordanian political orga-

nisation in view of the Jordan's (1988) decision to sever legal and administrative links with the occupied West Bank, Mr. Hawatmeh believes that it should remain an integral part of the mainstream DFLP," said a DFLP insider.

Another reason behind the split, according to another source, is Mr. Hawatmeh's drive to maintain the independence of the DFLP in the occupied territories. The group is represented in the unified leadership of the uprising along with other PLO factions, but Mr. Hawatmeh "has always maintained that the DFLP should be in a position not to allow its opinions and actions vetoed by others in the (intifada) leadership," said another source.

"Obviously this puts Mr. Abed Rabbo in a difficult situation within the Executive Committee, particularly when the DFLP component in the intifada leadership opposes decisions relayed to it by the mainstream PLO leadership," the source pointed out.

At the same time, when Mr. Abed Rabbo seeks to convince the mainstream DFLP leadership of the soundness of the Executive Committee's decisions, he exposes himself to be labelled as being "too close to Fatah," which is led by Mr. Arafat.

"It is a combination of all these factors that accumulated since mid-1988 that led to the split," according to the source.

Informed Palestinian sources also argued that Mr. Hawatmeh felt that Mr. Abed Rabbo, who is in charge of the information department of the PLO, has gone "too close" to the thinking of Mr. Arafat, whose so-called moderate approach to Middle East peace efforts is not fully endorsed by the DFLP founder, particularly after 18 months of an American-PLO dialogue got the PLO almost nowhere in its quest for an independent Palestinian state following Mr. Arafat's renunciation of terrorism and acceptance of the state of Israel in December 1988.

Mr. Abed Rabbo headed the PLO side in the dialogue, which was confined on the American side to the U.S. ambassador to Tunisia.

Kurds are hungry but so are the rest of the Iraqis Selective world sympathy — another level of double standards



A Kurdish fighter

The writer, Sana Atiyeh, has just returned from a three-week visit to Iraq.

THE KURDISH rebellion in the north of Iraq and the international attention the Kurds there have received as a result has somewhat shocked the Iraqi people and they see this attention as being unfair to the rest of the Iraqi population.

Both officials and ordinary people in Baghdad have described what they saw as "the sudden interest in the welfare" of the Iraqi Kurds as being "unjust and another page of the conspiracy against Iraq."

"Since when is the world, particularly Iran and Turkey, so concerned about the welfare and security of the Kurds of Iraq?" was a common question being asked among the people in Baghdad.

The Iraqis who spoke to the Jordan Times on the Kurdish question generally emphasised that the two million Iraqi Kurds enjoyed more rights than the estimated 12 million Kurds in Turkey and the 10 million in Iran.

"In Turkey, the Kurds are not even allowed to speak their own language (a law was passed in the Turkish parliament on Friday easing that restriction); if they did, they would be prosecuted," was

often uttered by Iraqis, who also thought that international concern for the Iraqi Kurds and not the other Kurds in other countries was yet another form of double standards in dealing with issues in the region.

"The Kurds have always been spoiled the most by the government," a young Baghdad resident, Mohammad, said when the Iraqi army began recapturing northern cities taken over by Kurdish rebels last month.

"What do they want? They practically have more rights than the rest of us do already," he added.

In 1974, the three northern Iraqi provinces of Erbil, Sulaimaniya and Dohuk were given self-rule by the Iraqi government, with the city of Erbil as the capital of what is known in Iraq as "autonomous Kurdistan."

"Previous governments failed to solve the Kurdish problem in Iraq, but the present revolutionary government solved it peacefully," said Nameq Al Sourji, secretary-general of autonomous Kurdistan.

Mr. Sourji, a Kurd whose

position is equivalent to that of a secretary-general of a government ministry, told the Jordan Times that the Iraqi leadership's attention given to Kurdistan "had reached a point where the area is almost more developed and distinguished than the rest of Iraq."

Mr. Sourji is one of eight other committee members, who in the local government hierarchy, comes after the executive committee members whose positions are equivalent to that of government ministers.

Iraqi Kurdistan also has a legislative branch consisting of fifty members that acts as a local parliament.

"Autonomous Kurdistan has a separate budget for all types of services, education and so on, and the municipalities execute the legislative decisions," explained the Kurdish official.

The Kurdish opposition argues that the local self-rule government of the Kurdish north collaborates with the central government in Baghdad, but this is not denied or refuted by the Kurdish officials.

Schools in the northern provinces study all subjects in the Kurdish language, the Kurdish official stated, adding "do you find this in Iran or Turkey where the Kurdish population is much higher than in Iraq?"

The Kurdish language is also required for students in the last two years of high school in the rest of Iraq.

In the central government in Baghdad, the vice-president Taha Muhiuddin Ma'ruf, is a Kurd; the Iraqi constitution states that the vice-president must be a Kurd. There are also 32 Kurdish members of the national assembly.

Mr. Sourji did not want to comment on the Kurdish rebellion in the north except to say that "the majority of the Kurds in Iraq are against it."

Kurdish opposition groups had been demanding an independent state in Iraqi Kurdistan. In the previous years, Kurdish rebellions have erupted, but were continuously quelled by the Iraqi government forces.

The latest Kurdish rebellion succeeded for a couple of weeks last month when the rebels occupied several cities and towns in the north of Iraq soon after the Gulf war hostilities ended. The government troops at the time were concentrating on quelling the Shiite rebellion in the southern provinces of the country.

Both Iraqi and international attention has been focused on the north more than the south, although the situation in the southern provinces had been much harsher than in the north.

Traces of fierce battles between the Shiite rebels and the government forces in the southern provinces of Karbala, Najaf, Basra and other cities were much more evident than in the Kurdish north. And

although services and food had been very scarce in the south, the Iraqi government had made a point of transporting food to the Kurds in the north after being cut off from Baghdad for two weeks when the rebels had controlled the major cities.

Kurdish residents in Erbil told the Jordan Times last week that most of those who fled the city and the surrounding villages had done so because food was not coming in from the government, which distributes basic food commodities at low subsidised prices. They said that the food stores had been looted and burned while the rebels had occupied the cities for two weeks.

The American, French and British planes began parachuting food and blankets to the fleeing Kurds in the northern mountains last week — something the Iraqi officials have criticised.

"Instead of throwing blankets and biscuits by planes, it is better to lift the sanctions, because what the Iraqi government could provide the people, whether for those suffering in the mountainous region or those suffering in Basra, is 100 times more than what is being parachuted by the planes," Deputy Prime Minister Tarek Aziz recently told CNN in Baghdad.

Trade Minister Mohammad Mahdi Saleh told reporters in Baghdad that the government was currently providing 10,000 tonnes of food supplies per day at low subsidised prices.

Some of the thousands of residents who were returning to Sulaimaniya and other cities in the north after the government regained control of the city said they had fled to the mountains fearing persecution and death.

"We were warned by the

rebels that if we remained we would be massacred by the army, but that did not happen," said a Kurd who had chosen to remain in Sulaimaniya.

Apparently, when the Iraqi army quelled the rebellion in the oil-rich city of Kirkuk (which is not part of Kurdistan) and began to head further north, the Kurdish rebels fled avoiding rough battles with the government troops.

"So the world is suddenly concerned with the north for so-called humanitarian purposes when the situation is much worse in the south," a senior Iraqi official told the Jordan Times.

"The Western governments are now talking about a security enclave for the Iraqi Kurds, and forgot about the Shiite fundamentalists in the south because they know it would not serve their interests," he added. "If they were so concerned about providing food for any Iraqi, they would know that the Iraqis in the south need it more. But they obviously don't care, and this whole show about the Kurds is just part of the scheme to divide Iraq."

Iraqis in Baghdad express resentment of sectarianism, to a point where they would be offended if they were asked if they were a Kurd or Shiite, a Kurd, and rarely would get an answer. So when special attention and care is given to certain sects...

As Mohammad put it, "For God's sake, we are all Iraqis and in the same boat living under economic sanctions. I don't see why the government and the international community should give more privileges to the Kurds than to the rest of the Iraqi people."

MIDDLE EAST NEWS IN BRIEF

Last British combat troops leave Gulf

LONDON (R) — Britain completed the withdrawal of its fighting forces from the Gulf Saturday when the last 340 soldiers flew out of Saudi Arabia bound for bases in Germany, the ministry of defence said. In a formal send-off, Prince Khalid Ben Sultan, Saudi Arabia's armed forces chief of staff, said: "The forces of Great Britain fought with great skill, honour and courage on the ground and in the air." At the height of the Gulf war, there were more than 40,000 British servicemen and women in the area — the second largest Western contingent in the U.S.-led allied coalition. Several thousand British troops will remain in Saudi Arabia for about six months to complete the task of removing more than 11,000 vehicles, 50,000 tonnes of ammunition and other equipment. British warships remain on patrol in the Gulf.

Bomb blasts at Turkish airline offices

ISTANBUL (AP) — Bombs exploded on Saturday at two private Turkish airline offices here, causing damage but no injuries, police said. An underground leftist organisation, Dev Sol, claimed responsibility for the attacks, in phone calls to newspapers. The group said the attacks were staged in protest flights by private airlines while the national carrier was on strike. A police official said that gunmen raided the downtown offices of the two private airline companies at about 8:30 p.m. (0530 GMT) and placed the explosives before escaping. The explosions occurred immediately afterwards at Istanbul Airlines, and the Pacific Airlines Tourism Company.

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New Treuhand chief faces one of toughest tasks in Germany

BERLIN (R) — Germany has handed a woman politician one of the toughest jobs in the newly-united nation — to reshape the once communist east and help graft it successfully on to the capitalist west.

Red-haired Birgit Breuel is new head of Germany's Treuhand privatisation agency, the world's largest holding company.

The agency's supervisory board Saturday chose the 53-year-old politician, a workaholic with limited business experience, from Chancellor Helmut Kohl's Christian Democrats, to succeed murdered Treuhand president Detlev Rohwedder.

"Few organisations in Germany have come under such wide public attack in recent years," said a Treuhand report on its controversial first nine months of work selling off, bailing out and winding down communist enterprises.

It said the Treuhand raised nearly 5.8 billion marks (\$3.5 billion), privatising one in eight state-owned firms, including all department stores and 70 per cent of restaurants and shops.

But only 1,000 of the 9,000 firms, which employ four million people at 40,000 sites, were fit enough to run without loans backed by Bonn, it said.

Nearly 350 firms face liquidation. Several are already being wound up with thousands of jobs being lost. Half the eight million work force could be jobless by

later this year.

Sunday's Berliner Morgenpost newspaper said former East Germany was wallowing in its worst-ever economic mire and that Breuel, previously a Treuhand board member, was courageously taking on a difficult job.

She will need the broad support of the government, opposition and the trade unions, the newspaper said.

"Politicians must above all stop treating the Treuhand as the scapegoat for conditions in the east," it said. "It was Bonn politicians who criminally underestimated the task."

Exasperated union-backed east German workers, confused and angry that the unification they wanted has turned sour, have taken to the streets in recent weeks to blame the Treuhand for dumping firms too quickly without thinking about unemployment.

Politicians in prosperous west Germany have accused the agency of dragging its feet over privatisation.

Breuel is likely to set a fast pace at the agency. A hard-working regional politician with a reputation as a free marketer, she has been favourably compared to former British prime minister Margaret Thatcher.

But her lack of hands-on experience in industry prompted the Treuhand supervisory board to appoint an unnamed industrialist as Breuel's deputy.

France's Michelin said planning up to 16,000 job cuts internationally

PARIS (R) — Cutbacks by France's troubled Michelin tyre-maker will result in 16,000 job losses and cost the government 1.4 billion francs (\$245 million), Budget Minister Michel Charasse said.

"Michelin's plan to straighten out (its finances) implies 15,000 to 16,000 layoffs throughout the world," Charasse told the regional television station-FR3-Auvergne Saturday.

Cie Des Etablissements Michelin, which is expected to report a net loss this week for 1990 of about five billion francs (\$877 million), said last week that it was planning to cut 4,900 jobs in France and nearly 4,000 elsewhere in the world.

Last June, Michelin said it would axe 2,260 jobs at its main plant and headquarters in central France and last week it said it planned to cut its worldwide

workforce of over 130,000 by 15 per cent. Industry sources said it would mean 12,000 job losses.

Michelin officials were unavailable for comment.

Charasse said Michelin's job cuts would cost the central government 1.4 billion francs in early retirement spending, adding to the central government's budget deficit which Paris has been struggling to keep under control.

Michelin's anticipated 1990 loss is expected to include about three billion francs (\$525 million) for restructuring. The tyre-maker reported net profit of 2.65 billion francs (\$465 million) in 1989.

Michelin incurred debts when it bought the U.S. firm Uniroyal Goodrich Tire Co. last May. Analysts put Michelin's debts at some 30 billion francs (\$5.26 billion) for 1990, almost double shareholders' funds of 17 billion francs (\$2.98 billion).

Iraqi refinery resumes partial production today

BAGHDAD (R) — Iraq's second largest oil refinery, crippled by U.S. and allied bombing during the Gulf war, will start production of some oil products Monday, the newspaper of the ruling Baath Party said.

The Al Thawra daily quoted the refinery's director-general, Kamal Ja'far, as saying that from May 1 the Dora refinery on Baghdad's southwest outskirts would produce 76,000 barrels a day of oil products such as kerosene, diesel and lubricants.

Virtually all oil products have been rationed in Iraq since the Gulf war erupted earlier this year.

"The refinery will resume its pre-war production capacity as of June 1 when we touch 92,000 barrels per day," he added in an interview published Sunday.

He said damage to the refinery's processing units ranged from 10 to 100 per cent and that 80 per cent of the pipelines within the complex had been destroyed.

Twenty-four of the refinery's 200 storage tanks had been des-

troyed and 16 were partially damaged, he added.

The country's largest refinery at Baiji, 200 kilometres northwest of Baghdad on the road to Iraq's third largest city of Mosul, was also crippled by allied bombing raids.

There has been no mention of when it might come back on stream.

Iraq's domestic consumption of crude oil before the war was 300,000 barrels per day.

Meanwhile, the European Commission is taking seriously an appeal from banks for help in avoiding billions of dollars of potential claims by Iraq, a commission spokesman has said.

But action would have to involve other countries, he said. EC financial services commissioner Sir Leon Brittan and External Relations Commissioner Frans Andriessen have received letters from the European Banking Federation seeking a system of licences that would avoid massive Iraqi claims against banks once United Nations sanctions were lifted.

Economists see need for another interest rate reduction in U.S.

WASHINGTON (Agencies) — U.S. economists say further interest rate cuts are needed to stimulate the economy and the task may be easier now inflation appears to have come under control.

Many economists had expected the Federal Reserve (Fed) bank to lower the key discount rate which it charges banks for loans, on Friday, after the release of the best monthly inflation report in nearly five years.

The discount rate is currently six per cent. The Labour Department reported that the consumer price index (CPI) fell 0.1 per cent in March, the first monthly decline since April 1986 when prices fell 0.4 per cent.

Wall Street investors thought this would clear the way for cheaper credit. Stock prices rose substantially following the release of the CPI report.

But shares lost much of their gains by midday on Friday when the Fed signalled interest rates would stay put by draining money from the banking system. The Dow Jones industrial average recovered to close up 15 points as investors figured easier credit

would be likely soon.

Many economists said the CPI report should ease fears of some policymakers that lower rates would reignite a fresh round of inflation once recovery begins. But policymakers may be waiting for signs of further economic weakness before another rate cut, they added.

"They have got the green light if they see something weak but they still have not stepped on the accelerator yet," said Martin Regalia, chief economist for the National Council of Savings Institutions.

The central bank has been lowering rates since late last year to propel the economy out of recession. On March 9 the Fed pushed the federal funds rate down a quarter of a percentage point to bring it to six per cent, level with the discount rate.

The federal funds rate is the interest banks charge each other for loans and is directly influenced by the Fed.

A number of economists believe another cut is warranted. "The economy needs a little push, because it is not obvious that the increase in consumer confidence is going to do it," said

Major banks face global credit crunch, ADB says

MANILA (R) — The world banking system faces a severe credit shortage during 1991 because of the huge capital needs of eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) said Monday.

"The combination of a credit crunch by the world banking system and sharply increased demand for capital in the USSR and eastern Europe could result, in the absence of major adjustment measures, in continued high real interest rates which would further increase the risk of recession," the ADB said in its annual report.

The Manila-based bank, comprising 50 members including the United States, European Community nations, Japan and developing Asian countries, said the fragility of the international banking system represented a major risk for the world economy, struggling to recover from the Gulf crisis.

ADB officials said huge capital requirements of the Soviet Union

and eastern Europe, coupled with plans by Kuwait to tap financial markets for billions of dollars in reconstruction loans, could lead to a serious global capital shortage unless worldwide saving was increased.

The ADB's lending to Asian countries topped \$4 billion in 1990, according to the report. The message of the ADB report reflected deep concern in Tokyo that world financial institutions must tackle the international shortage of capital created by the big gap between savings and demand for funds.

Japan is pressing for the Group of Seven industrialised nations meeting in London and the new European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) to join major financial institutions like the International Monetary Fund and ADB in helping to increase the flow of capital.

Some Asian countries have expressed fears that new interest in capitalism in eastern Europe

could siphon away money from Asia, the world's most dynamic economic region over the past decade.

ADB President Kimimasa Tsurumizu forecast in an interview with Reuters last week that real economic growth in the developing nations of Asia would slow to around 5.0 per cent in 1991 from 5.7 per cent last year because of the Gulf crisis and the recession in the United States and some other industrialised countries.

He said Japan should help cushion the impact on Asian economies of slower world growth by further deregulating its economy and liberalising trade.

Japan's trade surplus hit its highest level in two years in March, reaching \$8.7 billion from \$7.05 billion a year earlier.

The ADB report, released ahead of the bank's annual meeting in Vancouver on April 24-26, said growth in industrialised countries was expected to be significantly lower in 1991 and world trade would slow.

Oil prices were forecast to average \$20 a barrel in 1991, about the same as last year, although they would remain highly volatile.

"In 1992, an average price above \$20 per barrel is unlikely," it added.

It said among Asia's tiger economies, rising inflation and a worsening domestic climate might clip real growth in South Korea's gross domestic product (GDP) to 7.0 to 7.5 per cent in 1991, from 8.5 per cent last year.

Singapore's growth would also fall about 2.0 per cent from 6.0 per cent last year, but Hong Kong and Taiwan would probably do better than last year. China's economy would post GDP growth of around five-six per cent, the same as last year, it said.

Except for oil-producer Indonesia, the economies of South East Asia and the Indian subcontinent were also expected to slow, the report added. Indonesia would achieve 7.0 to 8.0 per cent GDP growth.

Bahrain expects dramatically wide budget deficit in next two years

BAHRAIN (R) — Bahrain said Sunday its budget deficit would widen dramatically in the next two years because of lower oil revenues, source of more than half of its income.

Rasheed Al Meer, assistant under-secretary for finance and budget planning, told Reuters the next two-year budget forecast that the 1991 deficit would treble to 115 million dinars (\$314 million).

It was expected to widen further to 125 million dinars (\$332 million) in Calender 1992. Bahrain would continue to cover the deficit with domestic borrowing through the issue of treasury bills and bonds, Al Meer said.

Recent figures show Bahrain's 1990 deficit narrowed by 35 per cent to 39 million dinars (\$104 million) because of a surge in oil prices fuelled by the Gulf crisis.

Al Meer said spending would climb by 10 per cent in 1991 to 590 million dinars (\$1.25 billion) the government pumped more money into development projects which were put on hold, after Iraq's Aug. 2 invasion of Kuwait last year.

He did not have details on

defence spending, which analysts are expecting to increase as a result of the crisis.

Lower oil prices in 1991 were expected to cut government revenue to 472 million dinars (\$1.25 billion) from 498 million (\$1.3 billion) during 1990, Al Meer said.

Al Meer said a government study estimated Bahrain had lost about \$2 billion as a result of the Gulf crisis.

About half of those losses were in the island's banking sector, which was forced to make heavy loan loss provisions and lost many lending opportunities during the second half of the year, he said.

Bahrain is a regional financial centre but a loss of international confidence sparked by the Gulf crisis badly hit most of its offshore banks.

Al Meer said Bahrain's industry sector lost an estimated \$200 million in revenue from the temporary shutdown of some of its state-owned plants, such as Banag and the Gulf Petrochemical Industries Co.

Loss of aid from other Gulf states was also a factor.

Al Meer did not name any countries but officials say Saudi

Arabia and Kuwait used to grant Bahrain 37.5 million dinars (\$100 million) a year to help cover its budget deficit.

Bahrain earns most of its revenue from oil but buys most of the crude for its 250,000 barrel per day (b/d) refinery from Saudi Arabia. Its own reserves are expected to run out by the turn of the century unless new oil is discovered.

Al Meer said Bahrain had repaid all its outstanding treasury bills with domestic banks after it suspended the weekly 14.5 million dinar (\$38.5 million) issues last August to help the banks conserve liquidity.

The Bahrain Monetary Agency began issuing the bills again on Jan. 28 but the amount offered at the weekly tenders is now only five million dinars (\$13.3 million).

Al Meer said Bahrain intended to push ahead with planned development projects during the next two years, boosting its capital expenditure to 145 million dinars (\$360 million) in both 1991 and 1992.

Capital spending reached 125 million dinars (\$332 million) in 1990.

Cray says new supercomputer outperforms Japanese models

TOKYO (R) — Cray Research Inc., the world's leading maker of supercomputers, has said that a prototype of its next series of machines outperforms rival

Japanese models, which some experts consider the world's fastest.

"It will have four to five times the performance for the same price as competitive models," Cray Chairman John Rollwagen told reporters.

Cray's assertion is based on tests conducted over the past few months by the Los Alamos National Laboratory in the United States and Japan's Atomic Energy Research Institute.

Los Alamos scientists, who unveiled results of their independent tests in a technical announcement, may not be pleased with Cray's promotional use of the numbers.

"These data represent the scientific computing workload at Los Alamos only. You have to use caution in comparing these results," said Harvey Wasserman, a Los Alamos scientist involved in the testing.

The performance of supercomputers — used for such tasks as modelling airflow over wings or making long-term weather forecasts — varies greatly.

A machine could excel in one field and fall flat in another.

The benchmarks run at Los Alamos compared single processor performances of Cray's prototype C-90 supercomputer, which will be called the YMP-16 when it is unveiled late this year, with NEC Corp's SK-5 and Fujitsu Ltd's VP2600 machines.

NEC's supercomputer, which the company says has a peak performance of 22 billion calculations per second, uses the world's fastest single processor, some experts say.

Cray's C-90 outpaced NEC's machine in 11 of 15 tests and outperformed Fujitsu's machine in nine of 15.

If the Cray was in its full 16-processor configuration, its speed would average 4.4 times that of an NEC supercomputer in its maximum four-processor configuration, and 18 times that of Fujitsu's best one-processor model, data showed.

Yet in several tests, the Japanese machines ran circles around Cray's, underscoring expert's warnings not to read too much into averages.

"It's like comparing apples and oranges. Averages don't mean anything," one said.

As if to prove the point, the peak performance of Cray's machine was 16 billion calculations per second, far below the 22 billion NEC claims.

"Their 22 gigaflops (billions of calculations per second) is apparently not borne out by the benchmarks at Los Alamos," Cray spokesman Franklin Pansy said.

Cray's 16-processor YMP-16 will be unveiled this autumn and will cost \$25 to \$30 million, he said.

Cray also introduced a new low-cost supercomputer at two-thirds the cost of previous Cray models with comparable performance. The Y-MP4E, based on technologies unveiled last year, is available in two- or four-processor configurations and achieves sustained performance of more than one billion calculations per second.

Machines will be delivered from May with prices starting at about one billion yen (\$7.4 million).

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Deutsche mark	401.7	404.1	Swedish crown	111.9	112.6
Swiss franc	474.2	477.0	Italian lira (for 100)	54.2	54.5
French franc	119.0	119.7	Belgian franc (for 10)	195.6	196.8

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Priority of appointment will be given to qualified registered Palestinian refugees candidates. The agency's administration reserves the right to make no appointment if a suitable candidate cannot be found from among the applicants without giving reasons.

Applications are made in writing on the special application forms available at UNRWA offices and sent to Field Personnel Officer and Deputy Field Administration Officer, Jordan at Jordan Field Office, Amman — Near Arab Community College not later than Sunday May 5, 1991.

CANADA

MR. JOHN GARUFI, PRESIDENT OF INTERNATIONAL ENTREPRENEURS I.E.C. LTD, MONTREAL, CANADA, WILL BE STAYING AT THE MARRIOTT HOTEL, AMMAN, TEL 660100 OR CONTACT TEL 811734.

MONDAY, APRIL 15th — THURSDAY, APRIL 18th 1991

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السيد جون جاروفي

سيكون في إستقبالكم بفندق ماريوت - عمان من تاريخ ١٥ - ١٨ نيسان ١٩٩١

الرجاء من المهتمين الاتصال معه على تلفون فندقي ماريوت (٦٦٠١٠٠) او الاتصال مع هاتف رقم ٨١١٧٣٤.

Soviet Georgia elects first president with wide powers

MOSCOW (R) — Parliament in breakaway Soviet Georgia Sunday boosted the republic's independence bid by electing nationalist leader Zviad Gamsakhurdia as its first executive president.

Deputies in the chamber rose to their feet clapping and cheering after the vote appointing Gamsakhurdia, who had ruled the southern republic as head of parliament since November, local journalists in the capital Tbilisi said.

The 209 deputies present also voted to give Gamsakhurdia widespread powers, including the right to appoint the government and declare a state of war in the republic, which declared independence from the Soviet Union last week.

Gamsakhurdia's election will strengthen his hand in the battle of wills against Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev, who is struggling to prevent the country from disintegrating.

"Since the situation in Georgia is extreme, and they consider

themselves to be at war with the centre, they feel it necessary to have a president with legitimate executive powers," one journalist said.

Gamsakhurdia will stay in his post until May 26, when direct presidential elections will be held throughout the southern republic of five million people.

The local parliament has yet to pass a law on how the May 26 elections will be carried out, but local journalists said it was likely Gamsakhurdia would serve for five years if elected.

Gamsakhurdia, 52, announced the start of republic-wide strikes Wednesday as part of a campaign to drive Soviet troops from the disputed region of South Ossetia.

The region's autonomous status was abolished shortly after nationalists swept the Communists from power last October to the first free elections for 70 years.

Since then more than 50 people have been killed in continuing armed clashes between Georgians and South Ossetians who

want to remain part of the Soviet Union.

Hardliners in Moscow have accused nationalist leaders in several republics, notably Russia and the Baltics, of pursuing separatist policies opposed by their populations.

The huge Russian Federation, whose populist leader Boris Yeltsin is also locked in a power struggle with Gorbachev, plans to hold similar presidential elections on June 12, which Yeltsin is likely to win.

Gamsakhurdia, who spent many years in prison before Gorbachev came to power, can now only be dismissed if found guilty of treason. He has the right to cancel decisions taken by the government and various ministries.

"The president has the right to declare a state of war in the whole republic or any part of it... he can impose temporary presidential rule," read the draft law passed by deputies.

Deputies also decided that the republic's president — who has to

be between 35 and 70 years old — would not be allowed to serve as the head of parliament. Gamsakhurdia was expected to resign his old post in the next few days.

Gamsakhurdia, who will form the republic's parliament — until now officially called the Supreme Soviet of Georgia — will henceforth be known as the Georgian Parliament.

The Soviet parliament has urged Gorbachev to declare a state of emergency in South Ossetia.

Soviet Interior Ministry troops have been deployed to keep peace in the region, but Gamsakhurdia accuses the Kremlin of fomenting unrest in the area by arming the South Ossetians.

He has dismissed the enclave as a Bolshevik invention and says it has no right to autonomous status.

Georgia gained independence from Russia in 1918, shortly after the Bolshevik Revolution. But Moscow regained control of the republic in 1921 by sending Red Army troops into Tbilisi.

Oil tanker sinks off Italy

ARENZANO, Italy (R) — A supertanker whose cargo of a million barrels of oil threatens the Mediterranean's worst ecological disaster, sank off the Italian Riviera Sunday after burning for three days.

The 109,000-tonne tanker Haveno was rocked by a strong explosion earlier Sunday and slid under a sheet of black oil less than five hours later off this small fishing port at 10:05 a.m. (0805 GMT).

At the site of the wreck, there was no immediate sign of any surge of oil from the tanker after it went down.

Experts who went out to inspect the site of the sinking said the Cyprus-registered tanker had apparently stopped leaking oil.

"Our planes are surveying the area right now," a spokesman for the anti-pollution emergency centre said.

Commander Giuseppe Temon, chief inspector of Italian harbours, earlier said that if the ship's tanks remained intact after sinking, they could be capped underwater to allow salvage operations to begin.

Experts estimate that the tanker, which originally carried 143,000 tonnes of thick Iranian crude, had already lost 40,000 to 60,000 tonnes of its cargo by the time it sank but said most of it had burned up.

If their estimate is wrong and the whole cargo of one million barrels of crude gets into the sea, it would be Europe's worst oil spill since the Amoco Cadiz disaster off France in March 1978 when 1.6 million barrels ruined the beaches of Brittany.

Italy declared the Haveno spill a national emergency Saturday as traces of oil started washing up on nearby beaches on the scenic Riviera.

The environmentalist group Greenpeace said its helicopter had sighted oil slicks Sunday totalling around 25 square kilometres, slowly moving towards the Ligurian coast.

"It isn't big. It's enormous," a Greenpeace spokesman said speaking from his helicopter.

The tanker first caught fire Thursday after an explosion, apparently during a pumping operation. Six crew were killed.

Three more explosions rocked the stricken tanker as it lay 1.5 miles off Arenzano. The latest, Sunday morning, sent a wall of flame leaping into the darkness and shook windows in the nearby port.

A mass of burning oil immediately spread around the wreck but the fire later shrank back to its original proportions — a circle of flames around the blackened stern.

In a separate development, a fire chief was quoted as saying Sunday that most of the 141 victims on board the Italian ferry that burnt to cinders last week died while waiting to be rescued.

"Most of the victims were in the check-point areas, the gathering points in case the alarm sounded," Livorno firechief Fabrizio Ceccherini told the Messaggero newspaper.

Violence rages as South Africa debates future

JOHANNESBURG (R) — Faction fighting raged within earshot of Nelson Mandela's Soweto home at the weekend, underlining the threat South Africa's township wars pose to a transition to democracy.

Police said four men were killed Saturday night when about 500 supporters of the Zulu-based Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) rampaged through parts of Soweto, attacking Khosas, who largely support Mandela's African National Congress (ANC).

The body of an Inkatha member, who had been "necklaced" with a burning tyre around his neck, was found about one kilometre from Mandela's home in Orlando West, witnesses said. They said the house of the ANC deputy president was never in danger.

Police said another six people had been killed in weekend unrest, three in Natal province which has been the scene of some of the worst of Inkatha-ANC battles for political supremacy.

Mandela announced Saturday the ANC was forming defence units to protect itself from attack, drawing immediate condemnation from the police, who called the plan a recipe for civil war.

Mandela has described township violence, which has killed about 1,200 people in the Johannesburg area alone since January, as the most serious threat yet to power-sharing talks with the government of reformist President F.W. de Klerk.

The ANC, unbanned early last year, has threatened to break off negotiations unless De Klerk fires Law and Order Minister Adriaan Vlok and Defence Minister Magnus Malan. The organisation accuses the ministers of siding with Inkatha.

But political commentators Sunday saw hope for the future in constitutional proposals unveiled by the ANC Friday.

"The process of political negotiation... has been taken a good step forward by the ANC's provisional ideas for a new constitution," the Johannesburg Sunday Times said in an editorial.

It said the proposals for univer-



Nelson Mandela
suffrage, a bill of rights and an independent judiciary provided a useful basis for "the most important debate in this country's history."

The Sunday Star said the ANC proposals cleared the way for early agreement on the shape of the new South Africa.

On the far right, the staunchly pro-apartheid and white Conservative Party (CP) was reported to be considering joining constitutional negotiations with its arch-enemy the ANC, and the government.

Newspapers said CP leaders Andries Treurnicht had ordered the drafting of proposals which included an acknowledgment that most "whites supported De Klerk's dismantling of apartheid."

"We have to accept the days of apartheid are numbered," the proposals said. De Klerk's reforms had wide support because they would lead to resumption of sports tours and an end to sanctions.

Finance Minister Barend du Plessis, in an interview in the Sunday Times, said international sanctions had contributed to the recession which threatened to plunge South Africa into anarchy within four years.

"There will be so many jobless people that you will have an ungovernable situation. There will be teeming millions who will have no jobs," Du Plessis said, adding the political instability was scaring away investors.

IRA, stung by killings, steps up violent campaign

DUBLIN (R) — The IRA, stung into retaliation by a wave of Protestant sectarian shootings, has stepped up its guerrilla campaign and plunged Northern Ireland into another round of "tit-for-tat" killings.

"It is a vicious circle with no end," a top Northern Ireland police officer said Sunday after one of the bloodiest weeks of the year.

The Irish Republican Army (IRA), battling to oust Britain from Northern Ireland, shot dead two Protestants, killed two policemen and used a woman as a "human bomb" to attack a police station with a primed bomb in her handbag.

The IRA's renewed offensive followed 12 killings this year by Protestant extremists from the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF) whose targets ranged from four Catholic customers in a country-

bar to two teenage girls serving in a mobile sweet shop.

The IRA always argues it is a liberation army that never targets Protestants for purely sectarian reasons.

But two of its protestant victims this week had no connection with British security forces or with any outlawed Protestant paramilitary group.

Security chiefs fear the latest attacks could plunge Northern Ireland back into the carnage of the 1970s when religion was often the only reason for targeting a victim.

"The UVF is just as callous as the IRA. This could be a never-ending cycle of violence," the senior officer warned. The death that most shocked Northern Ireland last week was the IRA killing of Protestant Derek Ferguson, shot while watching television with his two young sons.

COLUMN

U.K. minister lets house to prostitute

LONDON (R) — A newspaper reported Sunday that British Chancellor of the Exchequer Norman Lamont was renting out his house to a prostitute and it as a sex parlour for homosexuals. The 49-year-old chancellor issued a statement saying that if the report in the News Of The World was true, he would take all steps to ensure that the tenants kept the property. As chancellor, Lamont lives next door to Prime Minister John Major at an official residence in Downing Street. His own house is in the Notting Hill area of London. The News Of The World ran the story, headlined "chancellor's sex vice den," on its front page on the day that Lamont is to host a meeting of finance ministers from the seven richest industrialised nations to discuss the world economy. "The tenants were found by reputable agents. Although I have never met the tenants myself I can confirm that the references taken up included not only personal references but also references from solicitors, a bank and a building society."

Menem declines to step into family row

BUENOS AIRES (R) — Argentine President Carlos Menem declined on his return from a trip abroad to take sides in a public argument between his son and his vice-president, swatting away questions about his domestic life. Vice-President Eduardo Duhalde and Carlos Menem Jr. had publicly traded barbs while the Peronist leader was on the last day of a state visit in Germany. The vice-president blasted Menem's family, saying they were making his administration look like a comedy show. The president's son called Duhalde a traitor and a liar. "The problems between my son and the vice-president are their own problems," Menem said at a television news conference marking his return from a visit to Germany. "Let me answer like President Bush did when he was asked about his son Neil's judicial troubles. It's a problem of Neil Bush and the courts and not of the U.S. government." Neil Bush has been in the news over his involvement as a director in a financial institution which went bankrupt with big losses. Reporters swamped Menem with questions about his family, some of whose members have been named in a judicial investigation into a drug-money laundering operation. "I'm not going to answer questions related to my family, so please don't insist," he pleaded. "There are so many important things to talk about." Menem is being sued for divorce by his estranged wife, Zulema Yoma, whom he banned from the presidential residence in June using armed guards.

1st ever robbery shakes village

OSLO (AP) — Police in the Norwegian fishing village of Svolvær are investigating something unusual: A serious crime, Svolvær, a peaceful town of 5,000, experienced its first armed robbery, police said. A masked man robbed the local post office of 23,000 kroner (\$3,500) at gunpoint, said Ingrid Solli, a spokeswoman. "This is an island, so it is very difficult for someone to commit a serious crime and get away. I think that is why we haven't seen things like this," she said. Police had no suspects, and the culprit was described as wearing a raincoat, common on Norway's often rainy west coast. "Everybody here is talking about it. They are much more shaken up by it than people would be on the mainland. They thought it would never happen here," Solli said.

S. Korean bachelors face hard times in 2010

SEOUL (R) — South Korea, which imports all of its oil and most other raw material needs, faces the ultimate shortage — women. The Economic Planning Board (EPB) has reported that at least 28 per cent of men may not be able to find a bride by the year 2010. Its survey said the number of men aged 25 to 29 will reach 1,946,000 in 2010 while prospective brides aged 20 to 24 will total only 1,518,000. "South Korean bridegrooms may have to propose a dowry for their marriage, like those of some Middle East countries," an EPB official said. The EPB report said by last November, South Korea's population was 43,520,199 making it the 23rd most populous country in the world.

Carter urges China to free dissidents

PEKING (AP) — Former U.S. President Jimmy Carter strongly urged Chinese leaders Sunday to release jailed dissidents and not call international criticism of China's human rights abuses interference in its internal affairs.

"Our nations must expect our policies to be scrutinised and analysed by others," Carter said in a speech on Sino-U.S. relations, strained since Chinese

troops crushed a massive Democracy Movement in June 1989.

Carter said he has conveyed his human rights concerns "in almost the same language" to Chinese leaders he has been meeting on his three-day visit.

He has held talks with Communist Party Chief Jiang Zemin, Premier Li Peng, Foreign Minister Qian Qichen and State Councilor Li Tieying since his arrival

Yeltsin calls for dialogue, warns of disintegration

MOSCOW (R) — Russia's populist leader Boris Yeltsin has issued a new appeal for dialogue between President Mikhail Gorbachev and the disparate political forces ranged against him, saying failure to talk could lead the Soviet Union to ruin.

Yeltsin was speaking in a radio interview Saturday on the eve of a visit to France as a six-week-old miners' strike and other labour unrest pushed the Soviet economy closer to collapse.

Gorbachev, Yeltsin's arch rival in nearly a year of political manoeuvring, was also due to leave for the Soviet Far East en route to Japan where he hopes to win economic aid.

Yeltsin told Radio Russia that Gorbachev owed it to the country to hold "round table" talks with all political forces, including striking miners who demand his resignation.

"Sitting at that round table should be Gorbachev, Yeltsin and other representatives of the republics," he said.

"And representatives of the Communist Party and other parties, movements and strike movements, including the miners. Does this question need to be resolved somehow? Yes it does. Otherwise that will be it. The country will disintegrate."

There was no sign miners were easing their strike — which has halted production at one third of about 600 pits and cut coal production last month by 82 per cent by one estimate.

TASS news agency said 45 of 76 mines remained on strike in Siberia's Kuzbass Coalfield, and 12 of 13 were idle at Vorkuta in the Soviet far north.

Dutch police recover all stolen Van Gogh paintings

AMSTERDAM (R) — Dutch police said they have recovered all 20 paintings by Vincent Van Gogh stolen early Sunday from an Amsterdam museum.

"We have found all the missing paintings," a police spokesman told a news conference just hours after thieves broke into the museum and stole pictures worth millions of dollars.

Police said the stolen paintings were recovered from a getaway car used by the thieves and left abandoned near a railway station in the eastern outskirts of Amsterdam.

Police said the two thieves had broken into the museum, which houses the world's largest collection of Van Gogh's works, at about 4 a.m. local time (0200 GMT).

One held two museum guards hostage while the other ransacked the paintings. The men left the museum after 45 minutes.

Van Gogh, who was born in 1853 and committed suicide in 1890, sold only one painting during his short, tragic life, but his works have fetched record prices in recent years.

In May last year, Van Gogh's Portrait of Doctor Gachet was bought by an unnamed Japanese company for a record \$82.5 million.

The stunning prices paid at auctions for works by the passionate, visionary artist have acted as a magnet for art thieves. Sunday's break-in was the fourth major theft of Van Gogh's paintings in the Netherlands in as many years.

Pakistan premier criticised over weak Sharia bill

ISLAMABAD (R) — Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's fundamentalist allies have come out in the open to attack what they regard as a weak bill to enforce the Islamic code of Sharia in Pakistan.

But his opponents, led by former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto, have refrained from making an immediate denunciation.

The attack Saturday by a forum of Islamic religious parties led by Sharif's allies came two days after the government introduced a Sharia bill in the parliament's lower house.

The forum was also unhappy with Sharif for delaying the presentation of another promised bill to amend the constitution to facilitate Sharia's enforcement.

The bill, which must be passed by both houses of parliament to become law, declares Sharia to be Pakistan's supreme law, but gives few clues how this would work.

A forum resolution denounced the legislation as a "slaughtered, tattered bill" and called for the adoption of a stronger bill proposed by fundamentalists.

The forum picked on the bill's provision for honouring existing financial contracts and international obligations to accuse Sharif of seeking to retain the system of paying interest for three more years. It says interest is banned by Islam.

"On the one hand Sharia is declared the supreme law and on the other continuation of interest is being guaranteed," the resolution said.

"Continuing the interest-based economy, according to Koranic injunctions, is a declaration of war against Allah and Allah's Prophet and negates the claim of making (Pakistan) an Islamic welfare state."

The fundamentalists were instrumental in last year's election victory by Sharif's Islamic Democratic Alliance (IDA). The alliance defeated Bhutto's Pakistan People's Party (PPP), which they accused of being anti-Sharia.

After Sharif took office in November, they have been pressing him to fulfill his campaign pledge to enforce Sharia through a harsher bill they proposed.

But Sharif presented a bill of his own, which appears to sidestep fundamentalist demands for a new Islamic judiciary which could overrule parliament.

Sharif said in a speech last week he was not a fundamentalist and would not block modernisation — a remark which irritated the religious forum and prompted the fundamentalists to demand an explanation.

But the comment won him praise from Bhutto, who said her People's Democratic Alliance would cooperate if the prime minister introduced non-fundamentalist bills.

Delors backs rapid deployment force for Europe

MADRID (R) — European Commission President Jacques Delors said he backed the idea of a rapid deployment force in Europe to respond quickly to post-cold war threats.

Chiefs of Staff from the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) agreed at a meeting in Brussels Saturday to ask defence ministers to formally approve a plan for a European "rapid reaction" force.

In an interview published Sunday by the Barcelona-based Vanguardia newspaper, Delors said the force could be set up in three years if it comprised single-nationality troops divisions.

Delors said European public opinion had been frustrated by a

lack of coherence in Europe's response to the Gulf crisis. In the event of a new crisis the response would be different.

"The next time there would be more cohesion in the way we speak and act," he said.

Delors said a rapid deployment force could be an essential element in the Western European Union (WEU), which includes nine EC members, into the Community structure.

He said a first step had been taken towards establishing the WEU as the EC's defence arm last Monday at a WEU meeting in Luxembourg, called to discuss the outcome of the Gulf war.

It was the first few grains of sand in the building of a common

security policy. It could be the establishment of a role for the WEU in the transition phase towards a common foreign and defence policy," he said.

After more than three months of treaty negotiations to force a political union with a common foreign and security policy, most EC states now agree that the bloc will eventually have to assume a defence role to back up its economic muscle.

But Britain, the Netherlands and Denmark still fear that any sudden moves to enlarging the EC's brief beyond trade and economic matters could antagonise Washington, prompting it to withdraw altogether the dwindling U.S. military force in

Europe.

Three non-WEU countries who are members of the EC — Ireland, Greece and Denmark — were invited to the WEU meeting but Delors cautioned against expecting a further widening of attendance at future meetings.

Delors said also that Turkey and other countries hoping to gain admission to the European Community must be patient.

"We are trying to create a group of European countries on the basis of realistic ties... without pre-judging the architecture of a greater Europe in the years ahead, we first need to achieve economic and political convergence," he said.

EC foreign ministers face four-continent agenda

BRUSSELS (R) — European Community (EC) foreign ministers meeting in Luxembourg Monday will discuss a variety of issues ranging from a friendship declaration with Japan to organising food shipments for famine victims in Africa.

As part of a packed agenda spanning four continents, the ministers will also assess progress in talks with East European countries seeking closer links with the Community.

Poland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary have complained that their economies, already open to EC produce, would be penalised under the planned terms of association agreements with the Community.

During the morning session the ministers will study draft treaties circulated by Luxembourg to try

to secure an agreement on how to turn the EC into a political union. Luxembourg is the current EC president.

In the afternoon, they are expected to review an energy charter stretching beyond the Ural Mountains and to assess negotiations with the European Free Trade Association (EFTA), Europe's other major trading bloc, to create a 19-country single market.

A formal decision to lift a ban on imports of South African coins, steel and iron will probably be stalled in a procedural wrangle with the European Parliament, which wants to maintain sanctions.

Britain is also expected to report to its 11 EC partners on its efforts to prod the United Nations into setting up a haven in

northern Iraq for the millions of Kurds.

EC leaders backed the proposal last week but it is now overshadowed by a U.S. decision to set up refugee camps near Iraq's border with Turkey and Iran.

Luxembourg Prime Minister Jacques Santer and Jacques Delors, president of the EC's Executive Commission, will also report on their trip to the United States last week. They discussed the Kurdish haven plan and prospects for reviving stalled world trade talks with President George Bush and other top officials.

Their trip was the first under a Transatlantic Declaration signed last year which provides for twice-yearly top-level meetings.

Tokyo would like a similar declaration with the Community, but EC officials said the ministers

are expected to agree that the group's growing trade deficit with Japan should not be blurred by friendly wording on increased political and cultural cooperation.

Under the terms of the Anglo-Dutch plans for a pan-European energy charter, the EC would gain a reliable source of crude oil in return for providing extraction and production technologies to the Soviet Union and other East European countries.

Diplomats said they expect the ministers to split along north-south lines on problems in the EFTA talks because Portugal and Spain, in an argument which threatens completion of the talks this summer, demand greater fishing rights in northern seas and greater access to the Scandinavian market for their produce.

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